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# THE WORKS

OF THE

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LATE VICAR OF CHARLES, PLYMOUTH.

WITH

## A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS,

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# SCRIPTURE EXTRACTS,

ACCOMPANIED WITH

# NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS,

FROM SOME OF THE MOST STRIKING HISTORICAL PARTS OF

# HOLY SCRIPTURE.

# PREFACE.

It is hoped, and without presumption, that this little volume may be permitted to lay on the table, or in the window of various places, where larger publications might be inadmissible. The friend while waiting for his friend in the parlour; the man of business, or the traveller stopping at an inn; the youth from school, or the servants in the kitchen; with a great variety of other characters, which constitute the different departments in life; might, by such means, meet with this publication, and derive pleasure and profit from the perusal. And let it be remembered, that the Extracts here presented, are wholly from the sacred Word of God. The Notes and Observations, accompanying them, are with a design to render more familiar their several contents. And as it hath been known that sometimes, and not unfrequently, a word, or portion from holy Scripture, when unexpectedly brought to the view, hath been made particularly useful; the present selection is done with the hope, that similar events may be found now to follow; and from the Lord's blessing on the Lord's word, his gracious promise may be fulfilled in many an instance, when he saith, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not." (Isaiah lxv. 1.)

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# NOAH AND THE ARK.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

"Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with God.

"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

"And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." (Gen. vi. 8—12.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The first and distinguishing feature in the person and character of Noah; and which is indeed the leading feature of all that followed in his eventful life, is what the Lord himself said of him in the very opening of his history; "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Amidst the universal corruption of all flesh, this man found grace in the eyes of the Lord. And I pray the reader to observe;—it is not said that the Lord found grace in Noah, but that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. So everlasting, sure, and certain is that sweet Scripture, which the Holy Ghost hath given us by John, (John iv. 19.) and so uniformly marked in all ages, in the characters of the Lord's people: "We love him because he hath first loved us." There is in no man's heart, by nature, any love to God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." (Rom. viii. 7.) A stone wall hath no warmth in itself,

but from the sun's shining upon it. If there be any warmth of love in a man's heart towards God, his grace hath put it there. And this grace, as in the instance of Noah, is the sole cause of all the blessed effects which follow, in the lives of the Lord's people. Hence we find the same accurately defined in every age of the church. Hence the Lord said unto Moses; "Thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name." (Exod. xxxiii. 12.) Hence it is said also of Lot, when the Lord saved him, and sent him out of the overthrow of Sodom; "the Lord being merciful unto him." (Gen. xix. 16.) And in like manner, down to New Testament times, it was said to Mary by the angel; "Thou hast found favour with God." (Luke i. 30.) Hence Simeon, under the same impression of grace, exclaimed: "Lord! now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." (Luke ii. 29, 30.) It is very blessed to trace all our mercies to their source: and connect with present enjoyment, God's everlasting love. For this not only gives a double relish to them, be they what they may; but shews the security there is for their continuance; since this proves that they originate, not in any thing we have done or can do to bless God; but in what God hath done, and will do, to bless us. "Not by works of righteousness (saith one that could not be mistaken) which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus iii. 5, 7.)

I cannot conclude this part of Noah's history, of his finding grace in the eyes of the Lord, until that I have first desired the reader, (if peradventure he knoweth the Lord, or more properly speaking is thus known o

the Lord,) to remark with me, the peculiar blessedness of such a frame of mind. For my own part, I love to eye the Lord himself, in all his ways towards me; and to mark his goings in the least, as well as the greatest of his kindnesses. For if, as my Lord assureth me, "the very hairs of my head are all numbered;" if Jesus watcheth over the most minute things in my life, and such as I myself do not watch over; how very blessed must it be upon all occasions, to trace our blessings from the stream to the fountain; to run up from time into eternity; and in this day's grace to discover God's everlasting love. There are indeed, a thousand, and ten thousand mercies, which pass and repass in my poor and unthinking life, unnoticed by me, after all my wishes to catch the view of them; but such as the Lord enables me to lay hold of, and connect together, as so many links in the chain with the first spring; I find in them inexpressible sweetness, and a "joy unspeakable, and full of glory." It will be well if the reader, under divine teaching, should learn to trace his mercies; yea, even his most ordinary mercies, to the same source. Sure I am, the engagement of the mind to such a study is from the Lord, because it leadeth to the Lord. (James i. 17.) And what can be more blessed for the daily employment of our time here, than that which will hereafter be our everlasting employment throughout eternity, even "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John i. 3.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth; and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

"And God said unto Noah; the end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth."

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

To enter into a scriptural and spiritual apprehension of this part of Noah's history, and what God said unto him on the fall of man, and the Lord's determination to destroy man with the earth, (or as the margin renders it from the earth,) we must previously take a view of what the word of God hath stated of man's total apostacy before God ; and that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually."

And, *First:* the Scriptures of God, uniformly, throughout the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelations, and with one voice, declare, that by the fall of the first man Adam, the whole nature was tainted with corruption ; and became the subject of inherent sin.

*Secondly:* That this evil is an universal evil. Not one of the posterity of Adam is exempt from it. The declaration of God himself, to this amount, is final and decisive. "All flesh hath corrupted his way upon the earth." This monarchy of sin reigns with absolute sway. Every individual of the human race, by nature, is born under this dominion ; all alike are enrolled at their birth in this army ; and all wear the same uniform of this regency : sin faced with death.

*Thirdly:* The disease of sin is so deeply rooted in the very nature of man, as renders it incurable by all human aid ; yea, not only incurable, but unsearchable, by mere human apprehension. For thus speaketh the Lord in one Scripture, of the total impossibility for man to heal himself ; that the Lord compares it to the tawny hue of the Ethiopian, and to the spots of the leopard ; which in both, form their very nature, and cannot be removed by art. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil?" (Jer. xiii. 23.) And in relation to man's ignorance of the depth of his own depravity ; the Lord in another Scripture solemnly declares, that

none but the Lord himself can know it and search it out: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it? I, the Lord search the heart, and try the reins." (Jer. xvii. 9.)

*Fourthly.* The conclusion is the same in all; for all alike are involved in the sure consequence. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.) Here proves the universal monarchy.

Before we pass on to what is here said in this part of Noah's history, in which the Lord declared that he would destroy man with the earth; I beg the reader to pause a moment over this solemn subject of man's fall and ruin before God.

There is nothing new in this view of human depravity. It is now nearly six thousand years since the fall of man; and since which, the Lord himself declared, "that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." And the stream of time hath not washed away an atom of the original deadly poison. Its virulence, in human life, breaks out *now* very frequently into actions of the most baleful malignity. Where the restraints of grace are not given, there will appear similar fruits of it as at the first. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint." (Isa. i. 5.)

And what is most particularly to be considered in the view of fallen man, but yet by very few is regarded as it ought; namely, that the corruption of our nature is alike the same in all. The breakings out of sin, like the irruptions of the body, may be more or less, as temptations and the different circumstances of life vary; but the root is the same in every one; for the corruption of the heart is in the very core. So that though the buddings, blossoms, and fruits, of the deadly tree of inherent sin, grounded in the nature of fallen man, may not alike appear in the spring or

summer of life: yet there it still is formed within; and if the like occasion operated alike in all, the acts would be the same in all. They who are of a more refined education from such restraints, will be more secret and retired for the most part in their sensuality than the vulgar, who wallow openly in the mire; but corruption and depravity are equal in all. The Patriarch Noah, considered in himself, differed not an atom from the world. His finding grace in the Lord's sight, (and not the Lord's finding any goodness in Noah's heart,) became the sole cause of saving him from the universal destruction.

And let me add one observation more; namely, that however less flagrant the lives of some may appear than others; there is, in fact, no difference in the nature of man. We all spring from a stock sunk and depraved. We have all our nature lighted at one common taper from sinful Adam. And our unhappy father hath entailed one and the same heritage on all his posterity. It is not divided as men in common life do their property; part to one, and part to another, for all have and do possess the whole, as if there were no other. There is no difference in this sense between the greatest apostle, and the vilest sinner; and for this plain reason: because the grossest sin that ever disgraced human nature; the seed of that sin is in the heart of the highest saint. Wherefore it breaks out in one and not in another, ariseth not from any difference in their nature, which is common to all, but from the restraints or witholding of grace in that nature. And this corrects the errors of such as calculate sin more by its effects than by its cause. Men of this complexion dwell upon this or that particular sin, and not on the origin from whence the whole is produced. When the sons of Jacob were detained by Joseph in Egypt, their hearts smote them in the recollection of their cruelty to their brother; and as

if with one consent, their mind led them instinctively back to the consideration of that cruel transaction ; and they said one to another : " We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this distress come upon us." (Gen. xlii. 21.)

It is natural to the human mind to connect our punishments with our sins as the cause. But while we do well to do this, and to lament every species of transgression with unfeigned sorrow ; it will be our wisdom yet more to mourn, and with deeper affliction, over the natural and inherent corruption of a fallen state, which in no one instance in the whole race of man, is exempt from the awful depravity of all ; " for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

" And God said unto Noah ; Make thee an ark of gopher wood : rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

" And behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life from under heaven ; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.

" But with thee will I establish my covenant ; and thou shalt come into the Ark ; thou and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

" And of every living thing of all flesh ; two of every sort shalt thou bring into the Ark, to keep them alive with thee ; they shall be male and female.

" Thus did Noah, according to all that God commanded him, so did he." (Gen. vi. 14. 17—22.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The Holy Ghost hath been graciously pleased to explain this Scripture, concerning the command given to Noah, to prepare an ark, by another Scripture ;

and thereby most decidedly shewn, that the grace which this man "found in the eyes of the Lord" became the sole cause of distinction shewn the patriarch, from the ungodly world. And the reader would do well upon all occasions of this kind, when reading Scripture, to mark those holy explanations given by the Lord himself, in not leaving them to the comments of men; that he may not be carried away by the words "which man's wisdom teacheth, but what the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) "*By faith*, saith the Holy Ghost, by Paul, (Heb. xi. 7.) Noah being warned of God, of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Now observe, how explanatory this is of the transaction; and what a beautiful illustration it gives of the doctrine of grace: "By faith Noah being warned of God." What faith was this, but faith in Christ the promised seed? Noah knew full well from himself, and what daily passed in his own mind, that though he had found grace in the Lord's sight; yet in himself, he was of that fallen race, of whom it is truly said, "there is none that doeth good, no not one." (Psalm xiv. 3. Rom. iii. 10.) He partook in the common nature, and was alike involved in the common ruin of the Adam-fall transgression. When therefore warned of God, of things not seen as yet, nevertheless, knowing that by the sin of the first man, his whole posterity was subject to the just sentence of God's broken law; and that redemption was alone in Him, who in the fulness of time would come to bruise the serpent's head; knowing these things, he prepared an ark to the saving of his house. I intreat the reader to remark with me, what an analogy runs through the whole Scripture on this grand point. "By faith Noah prepared an Ark. By faith,

Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain." (Heb. xi. 4.) And wherein was the excellency of Abel's sacrifice over that of Cain? It was wholly by faith. Abel had an eye to the promised seed, and knowing himself to be a sinner, what he offered to God was by faith, with an eye to Christ. Whereas Cain, who regarded not either his own fallen state, or the redemption by Christ, offered but an offering in the pride of his own heart; and as a tenant to his Lord, brought "of the fruits of the ground." And hence it is said, that "Lord had respect unto Abel, and his offering; but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect." (Gen. iv. 3—5.) Faith therefore in Christ, as the promised seed, uniformly marked the people of God from the ungodly in every age of the church; and through both Testaments of Scripture. (See Heb. xi. throughout.) But we must not stop here. By this faith, Noah not only prepared an ark to the saving of his house, from eyeing Christ in this dispensation; but he also thereby "condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." And here again, the same beautiful analogy is discovered, as uniformly running through the whole Bible, in this distinguishing feature also, by faith Noah became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. And Abraham in after ages became heir of the same faith. "For the promise given to Abraham that he should be heir of the world, was not to Abraham and his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." (Rom. iv. 13.) And I pray the reader to pause, and observe with me, wherein this heirship of the righteousness which is by faith differs altogether from the world's inheritance, and all its dying concerns. Men of the world, who have their portion in this life, have their heirs also, to whom they leave their substance, and hand down their names and

wealth to posterity. And sometimes and not unfrequently, in leaving their substance for their babes, the oldest branch runs away with the bulk of what they leave behind them. But it is not so with the children of God. They are all equally interested in the promise; and all alike "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." (Rom. viii. 17.)

Neither is this all. For that Noah considered the Ark as a figure of the promised seed, is evident from another consideration, in that it is said, he not only became heir of the righteousness which is by faith, but thereby also he condemned the world.

The Holy Ghost, by Peter, hath given a more express declaration of this in the ministry of Noah, as condemning the world of the ungodly, by preaching to them of this righteousness; and very blessedly explained and rendered clear the whole. Christ (he saith) "having once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; by the which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient. When once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing; wherein few, that is eight souls were saved by water." (1 Pet. iii. 18—29.) Now here is such a blessed light thrown upon Noah's history, in relation to the ark, as puts it out of all doubt that the ark typified Christ; and that the patriarch knew it to be so. Now as it was said of Abraham in after ages, that it was by faith he offered up Isaac; and to all intents and purposes did intentionally offer him in sacrifice; of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called; so it is said, that he received him also in a figure. Hence both the ark of Noah, and the intended sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, were considered by both patriarchs as figures of Christ. (Heb. xi. 17—19.)

Neither do we stop here. For that Noah was a preacher of righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith in Christ, is also evident from this Scripture: because it is expressly said, that it was by the Spirit of Christ, by which he went and preached "to the spirits which are in prison, while the ark was a preparing." Hence we trace what is a very blessed part of the gospel of Christ, to trace and know, that in all ages both before and after the flood, Christ, by his Spirit, was in the patriarchs, and holy men of old, when the gospel was preached by them; precisely similar to what is said of the early prophets in their predictions of Christ; "searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (1 Pet. i. 11.) So that in all ages the Spirit hath been, and now is; and during the whole time-state of the church will be, the glorious One, to testify of Jesus.

And to add no more, that Noah understood the Ark to signify Christ; and that the whole process the Lord appointed for the preservation to the Lord's people by the Ark, referred to Christ, to keep them from the wrath to come; the Holy Ghost goeth on in this Scripture, and farther directed Peter to tell the church, that "the like figure, even baptism, doth also now save us; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. iii. 21.) So that the ark and baptism, and all things connected with deliverance of Noah and his family, all set forth Christ. Noah was saved from the water by the ark, as Christ, which that ark prefigured, saveth us. Not the baptism, no more than the waters of the flood saved Noah; for the waters would have destroyed Noah, and all with him, but for the ark. And all external institutions of every kind, be they what they may, if

resting upon them, instead of resting wholly upon Him whom they signify, will destroy, instead of proving beneficial. The Holy Ghost, by Peter, calls it a figure. And the church of God do well to call it no more. But the church is not saved by figure, but in substance; and that is Christ. (Isa. xlv. 24.) Every thing but Christ is a shadow; He, and He only, is the substance. (Prov. viii. 21. Heb. x. 1.)

I detain the reader but one moment longer on this part of the subject, just to observe, that as the Lord thus directed Noah, and consequently the church in him to the means of preservation by the ark; so we never read of but one method of salvation; and that by the Lord Jesus Christ only. For as the Holy Ghost, by Peter, declared; "neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.) The ark of Noah, at the flood; the ark made by Moses, at the command of God in the wilderness; (Exod. xxv. 10.) and the ark, which, in vision, John was enlightened to see in the temple; (Rev. xi. 19.) all were types of Christ. But we no where read in the word of God of arks, as if, (as hath been said) the men of Noah's days might have made arks, and saved themselves. For though, saith the apostle, "there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth; as there be gods many and lords many. But to us, there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." (1 Cor. viii. 5, 6.) They who talk of arks, "do err, not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God." What was the cause of the Lord's jealousy, in the case of the men of Bethshemesh? (1 Sam. vi. 19.) And what in the case of Uzzah? (1 Chron. xiii. 10.) Was it not the dreadful sin of passing by Christ, and trusting to the creature? I pray the reader for his

farther confirmation, to look at those beautiful illustrations of the subject given by the Holy Ghost himself, (Joshua iii.) throughout. (1 Sam. iv. 3, &c. and 2 Sam. xv. 24, &c.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

"And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark.

"Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean; and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth,

"There went in two and two unto Noah into the Ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

"And they that went in went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him; and the Lord shut him in." (Gen. vii. 1—5.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

What a gracious invitation the Lord here gives to his chosen servant, in confirmation of the grace which the patriarch had found in the Lord's eyes; "Come thou, and all thy house into the ark." As a kind father, who foreseeing a storm approaching, doth not think it enough to call his children from the field, but takes them by the hand, and brings them home to himself: so the Lord doth by his family the church; he not only provides an ark, even Christ, as an "hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest;" but by the love-calls of his grace, and the allurements in the inclining of the heart to embrace Christ, "makes them willing in the day of his power." (Isa. xxxii. 2. Rom. x. 3.) And I pray the reader to observe, the invitation is not *Go thou,* and all thy house into the ark; but *Come thou;* plainly testifying that the ark was a type of himself; to which the Lord calls his people to be saved. (Isa. xlv. 22.) And I cannot forbear the observation,

that this love-call of the Lord evidently includes the whole Trinity of Persons ; for the Scripture hath given us several instances in proof. God the Father is represented in a most endearing manner to this effect: (Isaiah xxvi. 20, 21.) God the Son, (Isaiah xlviii. 16, 17.) and again (Matt. xi. 28,—30.) And God the Holy Ghost, (Rev. xxii. 17.) And wherefore should it be thought incredible, (mysterious as the whole dispensation of grace is,) that in the accomplishment of the Lord's purposes, the Lord himself should make known the personal acts of each glorious person, in the one undivided essence of the Godhead ? Surely it is a gracious condescension in Jehovah, when in the love shewn by each to the persons of the Lord's people chosen in Christ, the redeemed and regenerated child of God is enabled to discover, and by lively actings of faith, to live in the enjoyment of that discovery, on the love of God the Father, the grace of God the Son ; and the communion of God the Holy Ghost. In attending to the grace contained in the bosom of this sweet Scripture, the Lord's invitation to Noah, let not that part of it be overlooked, in which the Lord saith to the patriarch : "For thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." Yes ; most blessed it is when the child of God knows, that as he is chosen in Christ, so is he accepted in Christ, and beheld righteous in Christ's righteousness. Hence the church is commanded to call her Head and Husband by this very name : The Lord our Righteousness. (Jer. xxiii. 6.) And it is the joy of the whole church of God ; that the church is in Christ, "who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption, that according as it is written : he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Cor. i. 30, 31.)

There is somewhat very interesting thus to behold the church of God as represented in the person of Noah, the father of the new world, as Adam was of the old,

with his family, entering the ark. And when we connect with it the everlasting events involved in this salvation; the subject riseth to the highest point of sublimity. How blessedly doth it realize what one of the prophets expressed; and all the prophets ministered to, in their successive generations. "Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? Was thine anger against the rivers? Was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses, and thy chariots of salvation?" Here is the answer: "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people; even for salvation with thine anointed." (Hab. iii. 8.)

I detain the reader a moment longer, on this passage of the entry into the ark, just to observe, that by the Lord's appointing both of clean beasts, and of unclean; two and two to go in with Noah into the Ark; that the marked distinction between them was not stated simply to intimate that the Lord was pleased to preserve the species alive; for in that case, whether clean or unclean, the thing would have been the same; but the appointment evidently set forth, that they were for sacrifices; and proves also that sacrifices were in use before the flood; not only in the garden of Eden, but immediately after; and as such, all typified Christ. And what a view is hereby given of that one all-sufficient and all-effectual sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom the whole referred; and in whom the whole had their accomplishment; for "by one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified!" (Heb. x. 14.)

But what a blessed close in this passage the Holy Ghost hath made to the account of the patriarch and his family entering the Ark; "the Lord shut him in." Yes; had not the Lord shut him in, Noah could not have closed the ark upon himself, neither have preserved himself in it. Here indeed is contained the

glorious doctrine of discriminating grace. Here is the freedom and sovereignty of that grace. For the same Almighty power which shut him *in*, shut the rest *out*. (Acts v. 13.)

And what tends to endear this precious doctrine still more is, that it is all of God himself. To run back to the original idea of what is said in the opening of Noah's history ; "he found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Here was, and is, the sole cause of all the blessings wherewith the Lord blesseth his church in Christ. All that follows are but as so many effects. And the same holds good in all ages. For as "no man quickeneth, so no man keepeth alive his own soul." And they, who like Noah, are in the Ark, Christ Jesus, "are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Pet. i. 5.)

And not to stop here. This blessed assurance ariseth to another most delightful consideration ; namely, in distinguishing the Lord's people from the world. The shutting the Lord's people in, while the ungodly were shut out, decidedly marks the difference of the "precious from the vile. It was not all that went into the ark with Noah, were alike partakers of grace. So in the present hour, numbers have a profession, *a name to live*, while yet they are virtually dead before God. There was a Ham in the Ark, one of Noah's children after the flesh ; but not of the spiritual seed of Christ. And there was a Judas among the disciples of Christ. "All are not Israel, which are of Israel." (Rom. ix. 6.) And "the children of the bond woman cannot be heir with the son of the free." (Gal. iv. 30.) Oh ! what incalculable blessings are folded up in that one divine assurance of the Lord, which he gave to Noah, and is alike given by the Lord in effect to all his seed ; "Thou hast found grace in my sight."

One word more on this part of Noah's history.

Amidst all the corruptions of the world, and all the judgments of God, which follow those corruptions: we here learn how the Lord watcheth over his own people. Before the Lord brings a deluge to destroy the world by water; an ark is provided for housing the people of God. Before the Lord rains fire and brimstone from heaven, to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, by fire; Lot shall be sent out of the overthrow. (Gen. xix. 20.) And before the final destruction of the ungodly, at the day of Judgment, the Lord Jesus will gather up his jewels, "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe." (2 Thess. i. 10.) Oh! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." (Rom. xi. 33. Rev. xv. 3.) I cannot dismiss this view of the subject, until that I have called upon the Noahs of the present day, to pause over the contemplation, and consider their mercies. Shut in in Christ; made one with Christ, and everlastingly preserved, and considered holy in Christ! Oh! the distinguishing grace of God! This is to find grace in the eyes of the Lord.

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth."

"In the six-hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

"And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

"And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man.

"All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.

"And Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark." (Gen. vii. 10—23.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

Several very interesting views might be taken from this portion of Scripture history, in the life of Noah, beside those which are more immediately before us. And were it not that the history itself, as referring to the whole of mankind in those higher concerns, wherein all our temporal, spiritual, and eternal interests are involved: I might call aside the reader to remark, with what a precision the Holy Ghost hath recorded the memorable time when the destruction by the deluge began; and of the duration of the flood until finished. It is indeed highly observable, and meriting particular regard, that throughout the whole Bible, when the Lord is about to make some special manifestation of himself, or his works; the Lord for the most part makes special notice of the time. This introduction by the Lord is so common, that we find the phrase continually used; "In those days, and at that time." And the forty days here enumerated, in which the rain was upon the earth at the flood, became memorable; and not unfrequently used in after ages of the church, in other of the divine appointments. Thus forty days Moses was in the mount with God. Forty days the spies were employed in searching the promised land. The like time, the great enemy of souls, in the person of Goliah, defied the army of the living God. Elijah, the prophet, went forty days and forty nights in fasting to Horeb. Nay, the Lord God of the prophets himself, (Rev. xxii. 6.) when, in the days of his flesh he was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, fasted forty days and forty nights. Ezekiel and Jonah also, on a special ministry appointed them by the Lord, measured out each of them forty days. And to mention no more; it is ex-

pressly said, and marked with a special note of observation, that the Lord Jesus Christ, in the interval between his resurrection and ascension, shewed himself alive unto the apostles, whom he had chosen by many infallible proofs, being "seen of them forty days." (Acts i. 2. 3.)

But I pass from the consideration of these things, though in themselves highly calculated for much spiritual improvement, in order to attend to those, which on the present occasion are more immediately connected with our present purpose; and in which both writer and reader, if their minds are brought under divine teaching, will find subject for the most profound and solemn meditation.

And *first*:—In the destruction of the world by water, which swept away, as with the besom of one universal death, all flesh, excepting Noah and his family in the ark, we behold the confirmation of the Lord's sentence pronounced on Adam at the fall; "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." And if a farther demand be made whence all this universal ruin, and now protracted as it is to the present hour through several thousand years, the Lord himself hath answered it by his servant the apostle; "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.) By the very nature and constitution of the first man at creation, his posterity was implicated in all the good or evil he himself became the subject of. His seed to all generations were all in him; part of himself. And as it was said in after ages of Levi, who from being in the loins of his father Abraham, when Melchizedeck met him, and blessed him; in that blessing, the child, though then unborn, was included; so in like manner, all the posterity of Adam being virtually in his loins when he sinned, be-

came as necessarily involved in his sin and punishment. He pulled down the creation of God upon himself and all his posterity, and judgment came upon all men to condemnation." (Rom. v. 18.)

Nay, from this universal stamina, the whole race are not only involved in original sin, but all alike fall under the sentence of death, as if all alike were equally guilty of actual transgression. This is shewn in those instances of infants, thousands of whom die as soon as born; and whose tender age cannot have subjected them to the possibility of any personal or actual transgression. The Holy Ghost, by the apostle, hath stated this most fully, when he saith; "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses," (and we behold it the same in the present hour,) "even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." (Rom. v. 14.) Hence this dreadful monarch, death, wields his sceptre with the same despotism over the babe just born, as over the hoary sinner, grown old in transgression, as grown old in years. He appears alike inexorable to all, when mowing down, with one universal scythe, the whole race of men. Surely, this preacheth, louder than a thousand sermons, the dreadful malignity of sin. "In Adam all die."

But we must not stop here. Holy Scripture solemnly declares that there is a second death which succeeds the first; and which as far as eternity exceeds time, the prospect riseth in magnitude to our view, and becomes more tremendously appalling to our nature. In passing therefore from the contemplation of the one, the death in time, to the meditation of the other, the death in eternity; we may well use the language of the angel when sounding his trumpet, and say as he did, "One woe is past; and behold another cometh quickly." The natural death of the body is induced by the separation of the soul from the

body, as the Holy Ghost hath said by James: "The body without the spirit is dead." (James ii. 26.) And this was accomplished at the deluge, in the watery grave there found by all that were without the ark: of whom it is said, that "all that was in the dry land died." And the millions which have since gone down to the chambers of the dead, both by sea and land, confirm the same. But who shall give a full and adequate description of that "eternal death," which followeth the death of the body, in which there is an everlasting separation both of soul and body from God for ever. Our adorable Lord hath given a most alarming apprehension in one Scripture of the striking difference between the death of the body, and the death of the soul, without describing in what the vast distinction consists, when, speaking to his disciples, he said, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." (Luke xii. 4, 5.) And in another Scripture, speaking of the misery of this eternal death in general terms, the Lord observes, that it is better to enter into life halt and maimed, than having two hands and two feet to be cast into hell "into the fire that never shall be quenched." And that the impression might have a stronger weight upon the mind, the Lord adds this alarming account, and repeats it thrice, when he saith, that "their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." (Mark ix. 43—48.)

Holy Scripture hath not descended into a minute description of these things, but hath in general terms said enough to excite the most fearful apprehensions of what may be expected in the wrath to come. Under one description it is said, "that they shall seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die,

and death shall flee from them." (Rev. ix. 6.) Under another it is said, "And men were scorched with great heat, and gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues; and they repented not to give him glory." (Rev. xvi. 9—11.) And towards the close of the same canon of Scripture, the whole is summed up in these words: "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. xix. 13—15.)

Is there yet a farther view of this subject? Yes: and so infinitely beyond what hath been already noticed in the awful consequences of sin in our nature, both in the first death of the body, and in the second death of the soul; that these contemplations, horrible as they are, sink to nothing in comparison.

To see sin as sin, in its infinite nature of evil, and in all its tremendous bearings, the view of it must be taken from contemplating the personal sufferings, soul agonies, and death, of the Lord Jesus Christ. In his blood-shedding we have the only full mirror in which to behold it; in comparison of which the overflowing of the whole world by water; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire; yea, the everlasting misery of fallen angels and men, to all eternity, are as nothing.

And this view of the Son of God in our nature, sustaining all that was due to sin in his own person, becomes the most important part of the subject to regard; because in all he did, and in all he suffered, he acted as the Surety of his people. It became him by the grace of God, the Holy Ghost saith, "to taste

death for every man." (Heb. ii. 9.) He suffered therefore, all that was included both in the first death, and in the second death. He drank of "the cup of trembling, even to the dregs." (Isaiah li. 22.) And who shall undertake to give a description; yea, what capacity of men or angels is capable even of conceiving the anguish of soul, which the great Redeemer endured in the accomplishment of this work of salvation? But the spiritual apprehension of these things in relation to the person of our glorious Lord, can alone give peace and joy to the souls of his people in believing, "abounding in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."

From hence alone, Noah found safety from the universal destruction around him. The ark in which he was preserved typified Christ. For without this, being the only means of salvation, the patriarch, no more than the ungodly world from whence he was separated by grace, could have been saved. He partook in that common fallen sinful nature, of whom the Holy Ghost bears testimony in all ages, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Rom. iii. 10.) He therefore, and all like him, partakers of the same grace he found in the eyes of the Lord, find everlasting salvation in Christ; and are alike with him, "heirs of the righteousness which is by faith." (Heb. xi. 7.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark; and God made a wind to pass over the earth; and the waters assuaged.

"And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.

"And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark.

"And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him:

"Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and what-

soever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl; and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

"And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake.

"While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."—Gen. viii. 1. 14—22.

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

GOD'S remembrance of Noah, is not to be understood as though the patriarch and his family so safely housed in the ark of God's own appointment, and by God himself preserved there, had been ever for a moment forgotten. (Isa. xli. 21; and xlix. 14—16.) But the expression is meant to say, that the time was come for Noah and all his cargo to come forth from the ark: and here began the new world.

Let the reader observe, the first act wrought by the patriarch on his putting his foot on the earth, was to build, not an house for himself, but an altar to the Lord; and as faith in Christ moved him to prepare an ark for the saving of his house; so the same faith in Christ prompted him to offer burnt offerings of praise, for the salvation of his soul by Christ.

I pray the reader yet more particularly to observe the grace in continuance, which Noah here found in the eyes of the Lord; and from the same source as the Lord had distinguished Noah from the beginning. "The Lord," it is said, "smelled a sweet savour," or as the margin of the Bible renders it, "a savour of rest;" referring to Him, both in his person and sacrifice, who is the "rest, wherewith the Lord causeth the weary to rest, and who is their refreshing." (Isa. xxviii. 12.) For as Christ is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. xiii. 8.)

so every offering and sacrifice from the garden of Eden, "to the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all," became typical of him. (Heb. x. 10.) Hence we read, "Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour." (Eph. v. 2.) Hence the Lord Jesus called himself, "the rest of his people." (Matt. xi. 21—30.) Hence the Lord promised by the prophet, to accept his people "with their sweet savour." (Ezek. xx. 41.) And hence the Psalmist declared his faith in the same, when he said, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." (Psalm cxvi. 7.)

And there is a very great blessedness in what this Scripture hath recorded; that the Lord said in his heart, on this subject, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake," meaning the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. But as what the Lord said, "he said it in his heart," unless the Lord had communicated the thing, it would have remained for ever a secret. How blessed is it therefore to find, that at a period of sixteen hundred years, the Lord, by his servant Isaiah, made known to the church his great grace in this dispensation. "For this is," saith the Lord, "as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wrath with thee, nor rebuke thee." (Isaiah liv. 9.)

And in confirmation, still more, the Lord pledged his word, as well as his oath; yea, both in confirmation, that while the earth remaineth, the several seasons of the years, and of day and night, and the different temperaments of cold and heat should not cease. And by his servant the prophet Jeremiah, in three successive chapters, hath left upon record a constant appeal, that these ordinances are to be considered as a standing memorial of the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus, throughout all ages. (See

Jer. xxxi. 35, 36. Jer. xxxii. 40, 41. and Jer. xxxiii. 25, 26.) And the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, at the present remote distance of near four thousand years, hath this renewed proof given her every night and morning.

Let not the reader overlook the vast subject of blessedness opened to the view in this Scripture of the patriarch's coming form the ark, beginning the new world with an eye to Christ; and offering his sacrifice of praise, on the one all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, "whereby he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 14.) And shall not the savour of Christ's name be to him, as the church of old, "as the oinment poured forth," for fragrancy, when beholding how Christ's person, and blood-shedding, and offering is esteemed before Godas a sweet smelling savour for the salvation of his people.

I only add from the whole, for I must not trespass farther, that the Lord in confirmation of this promise, and word and oath, added yet that sweet testimony of his love, in the rainbow which the Lord set in the cloud; and which the Lord said he would look upon, and remember his everlasting covenant between himself and his people. (Gen. ix. 16.) And when to this rainbow of nature, which is formed by the reflection of the rays of the sun on the watery cloud, and which we behold in that beautiful arch in the heaven; we consider, what the New Testament hath said of Christ, "being clothed with a cloud; and his head encircled with a rainbow." (Rev. x. 1.) we see the divine confirmation of the whole, not only in nature and providence, but in grace; let the reader at any time, as he beholds the rainbow, call to mind what the Lord hath said, and take confidence in the Lord's word, and oath and promise: "I, saith the Lord," to his church, "will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and the glory in the midst of her." (Zech. ii 5.)

# ABRAHAM

STANDING UP BEFORE

# THE CHILDREN OF HETH,

TO PURCHASE A BURIAL GROUND FOR HIS BELOVED SARAH.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying,

"I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." (Gen. xxiii. 3, 4.)

What a very interesting representation is here made of the great father of the faithful in that memorable season of his life, when the Lord had made a breach in his house, and in his family; by the death of his beloved Sarah. And never surely, was there a more finished portrait of all that can be deemed unaffected, simple, and truly sublime, than what is here drawn of Abraham, thus standing up before the sons of Heth, to seek a burying ground for depositing the remains of one that had been so near and dear to him, and who was now no more! I have often thought, that if this patriarchal record was any where but among the Sacred Writings, how continually would men of letters speak of the beauties and elegancies of it, as the first standard of all composition.

But while we figure to ourselves the venerable patriarch, thus appearing before the sons of Heth, in all the manners of the gentleman, and the man of feeling; we shall do well to look at him in a much

higher character, as the man of godliness, and of sound faith, in submission to the will of the Lord. We very plainly discover in this short history, (short as it is) how all the finer sensibilities of nature were combined with those of grace; and that while the husband mourned, as became him, over the bereaving providence, the saint of God rose above the affliction from confidence in God.

We are not forbidden to sorrow at any of those sharp exercises, which are the natural consequence of our present fallen state; provided, we "sorrow not as others which have no hope." The Son of God himself, hath sanctioned the tears of mourners, by weeping at the grave of Lazarus. And the Holy Ghost hath recorded, with marks of seeming approbation, the sympathizing tokens of such as wept over the death of the faithful servants of the Lord. (Gen. l. 3. 10. Numb. xx. 29. Deut. xxxiv. 8.) Indeed, tears become a sweet relief to the afflicted, by giving vent to an overburthened breast of sorrow; similar to the operations of the Lord, in other departments of nature, when as by the sun's heat, vapours are exhaled; and which by descending in gentle showers, clear the atmosphere of what was before oppressive: so when our prosperous circumstances have induced vapours, too great to be profitable for a continuance, the Lord causeth a reverse to follow; which like the falling rain to the air, tends to cool the ardour of all our earthly delights.

The refinements of grace therefore, are very blessedly felt and enjoyed, when under a sanctified affliction, be it what it may, (and the first paroxysms of grief have somewhat subsided,) the faithful followers of the Lord have their minds tranquilized, and brought into an holy submission to the divine will. It is a sad symptom of a rebellious and revolting heart in the Lord's people, when they give that a first place in

their esteem, which never ought to be more than secondary. And it is a sin which cannot fail to bring with it its own punishment. For whatever is suffered to take deep root in our affections, of things in their nature perishable; must give a proportioned pain when the Lord is pleased to dig them up. It was this which made the lamentation of Rachel so bitter and piercing, that was heard in Ramah; "Rachel weeping for her children, and refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not." (Jer. xxxi. 15.) Whereas, had that mother in Israel had her first joy in the God of her children, instead of making her children her God; she would have found comfort in that, though the Lord had taken her children, he had not withdrawn himself. Every providence of the Lord therefore is gracious, when sanctified with this blessing. They teach the vanity and emptiness of all creature comforts. They tend to wean the heart from setting our affections on what is precarious and uncertain. They compel the soul to look for somewhat more sure and substantial to lean upon for good. And when the vanity of all things here below, of creature comforts, is not only seen, but felt and understood; that forms a blessed conclusion to the trial, when constrained to cease from man, we are drawn to God; and to say with one of old; "When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." (Psalm lxi. 2.)

Neither is this all. Dispensations of this kind when sanctified by grace, teach above every other lesson, God's sovereignty.—And it is a subject of all others, which the spiritual church of the Lord hath need continually to study. In every minute event which relates to the Lord's people, the Lord is carrying on one great and gracious design; and all for good concerning them. "The Lord's voice (saith the prophet) crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom

shall see thy name; hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." (Micah vi. 9.) So that the rod is to be *heard,* as well as *felt;* and the gracious child of God, is hereby distinguished from the ungodly, when the Lord's voice is known in it, and acknowledged in the dispensation; and be the affliction ever so great, ever so painful; when the voice of the Lord is discernible to the ear of faith, sweetly it sounds through all the chambers of the heart, saying, "Be still, and know that I am God!" (Psalm xlvi. 10.) As in the case of the patriarch, so equally the same to all the patriarch's seed. I am still Abraham's God now, as much as before: and though Sarah be taken from Abraham; the God of Abraham liveth; and is and will be Abraham's God for ever.

And to add no more. When to this sovereignty of God, the child of God is brought to bend in dutiful submission, and he is led to see that every vacancy made in the heart by the departure of earthly friends, God filleth with himself; and that as creature comforts fall off, Creator consolations abound, and are more enjoyed; though all fail, God never faileth; though every brook be dry, the everlasting fountain never ceaseth to flow: this brings up the soul into a settled state of joy and peace in believing, "abounding in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." And in every loss, and every bereavement, he hears the Lord speaking in all, and saying in words most gracious, like those of Elkanah to Hannah: "Why weepest thou? Why eatest thou not; and why is thy heart grieved; am I not better to thee than ten sons?" (1 Sam. i. 8.)

It was such spiritual views of things which caused the patriarch Abraham to stand up in so dignified a manner under his sorrow before the sons of Heth. And such will be the sanctified apprehension of all Abraham's seed, under similar exercises. And

though tears may fall; yea, tears are graceful, as the tribute of nature, to fall; yet they will be, as the spouse said, like the "spiced wine of the pomegranate." We wipe the tear of nature, when we can say as the patriarch did in grace: I am a stranger and a sojourner here among you, as all my fathers were: "Let me bury my dead out of my sight."

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him:

"Hear us my lord, thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withold from thee his sepulchre; but that thou mayest bury thy dead.

"And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth." (Gen. xxiii. 5,—7.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The same remark will meet us here, in the courtesy shewn by the sons of Heth to Abraham, as was before observed of the gracefulness of the patriarch in his address to them. Both indeed are samples of eastern urbanity; and exhibit a beautiful representation of the simplicity of manners in the primitive age. But passing away from the consideration of these minor concerns, it will be more to our purpose to notice the improvements which, in a scriptural and spiritual sense, arise out of this part of Abraham's history; and for which, so important are they, that the Holy Ghost, hath been pleased to make them the subject of an whole chapter.

The children of Heth had no apprehension of what had passed between God and Abraham, prior to this event. They could not therefore have a consciousness of what occupied the partiarch's mind in relation to God's promises. They looked no farther than to the

mere interment of the dead. And as men of the world regard more the pomp and parade upon funeral occasions than any thing beside ; they considered Abraham as a great prince, who would be gratified with the best of their mausoleums, to deposit his dead in, and therefore generously offered him the choice of their sepulchres. But our views must be directed to higher objects, being tanght better ; and in the instance of the interment of Sarah, discover somewhat beyond the circumstance of outward shew and grandeur.

When God called Abraham by sovereign grace, from Ur, of the Chaldees, and at that time an idolater ; and bid him quit his father's house ; God gave him an absolute promise of this land of Canaan. See (Gen. xi. 31, and Gen. xii. 1, 7.) And the Holy Ghost, in after ages by the mouth of Stephen, explained this promise in a yet more open manner. For speaking of Abraham, Stephen said, " Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran ; and from thence when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye dwell. And he gave him no inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on ; yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." (Acts vii. 4, 5.)

Now the patriarch believing this, and knowing what God had promised he was also able to perform, wished to deposit the remains of his beloved Sarah in this land ; thereby taking possession of it, until the time came, when the Lord would accomplish his purpose, and bring all his church into the absolute property by a deed of gift.

I pause here to remark, the very illustrious faith of Abraham, upon this occasion. The land of Canaan, the patriarch considered that it was typical of that better country, which hath foundations, " whose builder and maker is God." In his leaving Haran, for Canaan,

shadowed forth the patriarch, and his seed, leaving the world for Christ. And hence our Lord himself blessedly explained the figure by the substance; when saying to the Jews; "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad." (John viii. 5, 6.) He beheld the promised land as the sacred ground wherein in the after ages of the church, and in what is called the fulness of time, the Son of God would come and restore all things. He foresaw that here Christ would do away "sin by the sacrifice of himself." He beheld by the eye of faith, the Son of God in our nature, by his own death, abolishing "death, and bringing life and immortality to light by the gospel." Under the lively impression of these ideas, he desired to take possession of the land, by the burial of Sarah. He there deposited the body of Sarah, "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection at the last day." And hence when Abraham himself had finished his day and generation, he directed that his body should be carried to the same charnel-house to wait the Lord's coming. (Gen. xxv. 10.) Hence also when Isaac died his remains were lodged in the same. And hence when Jacob was dying, he charged his children to be sure to carry his body thither. "Bury me (said he) with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron, the Hittite. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebecca his wife. And there I buried Leah." (Gen. xlix. 29.) "And Joseph also when dying in Egypt, took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." (Gen. l. 25.) Observe the strong faith of the patriarch, "God will surely visit you," meaning, will give you Canaan. Let my bones be there; from thence at the last day, I shall arise in him, and his great salvation, who "is the resurrection and the life." So died all the patriarchs

in faith. And this explains the purport of Abraham's request of the sons of Heth. (Heb. xi. 13.)

I must not allow myself to enlarge on this subject, most interesting as it is. But I cannot dismiss it in this part of it, until that I have first called upon the reader to remark with me, the very different state of the children of Heth, in their descent to their sepulchres. Ignorant of any hope beyond the present life; as they lived, so they died, unconscious of salvation, and unconscious of the want of it; "without God and without Christ in the world." And thus in all ages, from the fall to the present hour, the carnal and ungodly live and die in the vanity of their mind; and as the Scripture solemnly expresses it: "they follow the generation of their fathers, and never see light." (Psalm xlix. throughout.)

True indeed, like the sons of Heth, many of this description excel in the courtesy of human life, and many also are found in the exercise of moral virtues. The Romans and Lacedemonians, are remarked in history on this account, for much good order in society. And as far as these things go in the transactions between man and man, they are all highly commendable. But they reach no farther; they have respect only to the life that now is, and not to that which is to come. The decisive and unalterable words of Christ admit of no appeal. There can be no entrance into the heavenly Canaan, but by regeneration. "Except a man be born again," silenceth at once all other pretensions; and becomes alike the impassable gulph, both to the mere moral man, and to the profane. (John iii. 3. Luke xvi. 26.)

The Holy Ghost hath described the awful state of the death of the ungodly by his servant the prophet, in such lively characters as is impossible to read, but with the most awakened apprehension. "Son of man, (saith the Lord, by the prophet,) wail for the mul-

titude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit. They shall fall in the midst of them that are slain by the sword. The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him. They are gone down, they lie uncircumcised:" (See Ezek. xxxii. 18. to the end.) Nine times, within the compass of those few verses, are the uncircumcised described, (meaning the unregenerate) as going down into hell, with their weapons of war; "their swords upon their heads, and their iniquities upon their bones, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. There is Edom, her kings, and all her princes, which were slain by the sword; they shall be with the uncircumcised, and with them that go down to the pit." And the Son of God hath given his decision to the same; when in his gospel, he speaks of their awful state, under the character of the "worm that dieth not, and the fire never to be quenched." (Mark ix. 44—48.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And Abraham communed with them saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and intreat for me to Ephron, the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of the field, for as much money as it is worth: he shall give it me for a possession of a burying place amongst you.

"And Ephron, the Hittite, answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying,

"Nay my lord! hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee; bury thy dead.

"And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land.

"And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me. I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there.

"And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him, My lord, hearken unto me; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? Bury therefore thy dead.

"And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron, and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant.

"And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, the field and the cave; and the trees in the field in all the borders thereof were made sure unto Abraham, for a possession." (Gen. xxiii. 8—18.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

In this portion of the conference between Abraham and the sons of Heth, we enter upon an interesting part of Scripture history. This is the first record in the annals of mankind of the purchase of land. And it is the more striking and singular, in that the transaction took place between the Lord's people, and strangers. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein," (Psalm xxiv. 1.) As such, it might have been supposed that what was the Lord's became by right, and without purchase, his people's. But no! By the fall of man, the Lord's people had justly forfeited their inheritance; that is, as far as their inheritance became alienable; mortgaged it might be; but sold it could not. But the Lord had made reserve for the restitution, in what Paul, under the Holy Ghost, calls, the "redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Eph. i. 14.) And hence the law in after ages, enjoined, that if one of the children of Israel became poor, and had sold away some of his possession, "the next of kin should redeem that which his brother had sold." (Levit. xxv. 25.) Here therefore, opened that most blessed subject by type and figure of Christ, our nearest of kin, redeeming our

mortgaged inheritance, to whom by relationship the right of redemption belonged. And hence, Abraham, with whom the blessing was deposited, here makes purchase of the forfeited inheritance, and takes possession in the first footing it by death. This becomes an apt figure of Him, who by death abolished death, and secured the possession of the everlasting covenant to all his members. And no less the very significant manner of this transaction. For as the Patriarch weighed out in this purchase, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant; so our Lord Jesus Christ paid down the full equivalent for the redemption of his people, and their possession in him of their inheritance, not indeed by bags of gold, but by his own most precious blood, which satisfied both law and justice; and in what might well be called the current coin of heaven.

I do very earnestly intreat the reader to remark with me, the very geat blessedness contained in this representation of the church's first possession of our earthly Canaan by death; as becomes the pledge and earnest for the future possession in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, of the heavenly Canaan by life. For as the Holy Ghost most graciously speaks by his servant the apostle; "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end, Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." (Rom. xiv. 8, 9.)

A few leading points will make this doctrine abundantly clear; and, to the spiritual and scriptural apprehension of the child of God, will become a most delightful testimony to this momentous doctrine.

And *first:* The possession of Canaan by purchase, and by death; in the instance of the great father of the

faithful, Abraham, and his beloved Sarah, form not only the truest pledge to all the succeeding generations of the church, as typical of the heavenly Canaan; but shadowed forth the outlines of him, and his great salvation, who, both by purchase and by death, hath secured the everlasting inheritance of his people, in a "kingdom which cannot be moved."

*Second:* The possession which the remains of our great mother might be said to take of the promised land, manifests that the covenant of grace is the same with the Lord's people, as truly in death as in life. "All things are your's, (saith an apostle to the church) whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. iii. 21. &c.)

*Thirdly:*—This possession of Canaan in the dust, by the dust of this great mother in Israel, until the morning of the resurrection, shadowed forth what the Lord Jesus Christ, in the days of his flesh, told the Sadducees, in answer to their question concerning the resurrection of the dead. "Have ye not read, (said our Lord,) that which was spoken unto you by God, saying; I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but the living." (Matt. xxii. 31, 32.) These patriarchs had been buried in the same sepulchre at Machpelah, as Abraham was then purchasing from the sons of Heth; for her burying place. But though many hundred years had passed between: God was as much their God in death, as in life. Nothing could arise to do away that covenant which was "ordered in all things and sure. And the same proclamation is in effect said now, to all the spiritual seed of Abraham. "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one. And to thy seed, which is Christ. And hence it is ad-

ded: If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. iii. 16—29.)

*Fourthly* :—The Son of God gave yet an additional testimony to the whole, when in his conversation with Martha at the death of Lazarus he graciously pointed out how the resurrection of the just would be effected at the last day: namely, in and by himself. "I am (said Christ,) the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die!" (John xi. 25, 26.) And the Holy Ghost most blessedly confirmed the same, when by his servant the apostle Paul, he said; "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. viii. 4.) The dead in Christ are not separated from the Spirit; for in their death as much as in their life, that Almighty God is with them, "and abideth with them for ever." (John xiv. 16. 1 Cor. vi. 19.)

One word more, before we take leave of this part of the subject: The dust of the saints is as precious in the sight of God, and the persons of the Lord's people as dear to the glorious Head of the church, when their comeliness is turned into corruption, as when animated in the body. Hence the Holy Ghost declared: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." (Psalm cxvi. 15.) And though their ashes mingle, as in the instance of Sarah, "with them that go down to the grave uncircumcised, (as the prophet describes them, Ezek. xxxii. 18. &c.) with their iniquities upon their bones;" yet in that glorious morn of the resurrection, when the Lord Jesus shall come to raise his dead, (not by the naked word of his power as the unregenerate will arise) but by

the oneness he hath with their persons; all will awake to the glories of eternity, by his Spirit that dwelleth in them. And as the attraction of the magnet instantly separates the filings of steel from the earth around, and draws the whole to it by its influence; so that Almighty God, which hath given such properties to the magnet, will draw all for separation that are his to himself, that where He is, "there shall they be also." (John xiv. 3.)

How truly blessed therefore is the consideration to every redeemed and regenerated child of God! Hence when we consign the remains of any that are near and dear unto us, who die in the Lord: though constrained to say as Abraham did, by his beloved Sarah; Let me bury my dead out of my sight; yet when no longer lovely to our view, they are in Jesus the same in death as in life—lovely to the Lord.

The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, is their God also. "And God is not the God of the dead only; but of the living; for all live unto him." (Luke xx. 38.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre; the same is Hebron, in the land of Canaan.

"And the field and the cave that is therein were made sure unto Abraham, for a possession of a burying place by the sons of Heth." (Gen. xxiii. 19, 20.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

From the tomb of Sarah we may gather many a sweet and fragrant grave flower, which since the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, hath sprung up to perfume the church of the living God. And it will be our mercy if the Lord the Spirit both enables

us to gather them, and regales our spiritual senses with the smell of them. For sure I am, that the very aspect of death is changed by his death; and all the blessed dead, which die in the Lord, do but sleep as Jesus slept; and their awakening will be as his was, during the short interval from his death to his resurrection. Theirs is no more, however, lengthened in duration. For the Holy Ghost, by Paul, calls it a sleep. (1 Thess. iv. 14, 15.) And when this mother in Israel, with the Abrahams, and Isaacs, and Jacobs, shall arise at the last day, their bodies will be as unconscious of the length of sleep, whether as of a single night, or a thousand years. Such is the blessed sleep of the dead in Christ! How delightfully doth the Lord Jesus express this, in relation to himself, when by his servant the prophet, he contemplated the glorious event ages before its accomplishment; "Upon this I awaked and beheld, and my sleep was sweet unto me," (Jer. xxxi. 26.) The six hours the Son of God in our nature hung on the cross, did away the whole guilt and punishment due to our sins; "for by that one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 14.) And by "his death, he hath destroyed him that had the power of death." (Heb. ii. 14.) Hence when awakening from the grave, the Lord Jesus Christ might be supposed to say, "his sleep was sweet unto him;" for by short sleep of a temporary death, he had destroyed the powers of that everlasting sleep of eternal death, unto which all his people, as well as the whole race of men were subject by the Adam-fall transgression; and when on Christ's awakening, he beheld and viewed the eventful consequences thereby to all his people, "his sleep was sweet unto him."

It will form a very profitable subject for the meditation of the Lord's people, at the sepulchre of Sarah; if under the Lord's teaching, while we contemplate the same, we consider some few of the scriptural

testimonies which are found in the word of God, to this amount:

And *first:*—Death though it destroys all the natural affinities formed in this life; so that the kindest-hearted friend, and the nearest and dearest kindred among men, on the departure of the most beloved object, must, and would very soon after the breath became extinct, say as Abraham did of his beloved Sarah; "let me bury my dead out of my sight;" yet death makes no separation between Christ and his members. They are as much united to their spiritual Head in death, as in life. They sleep in Jesus. And though there is for a while, even unto the morning of the resurrection, a separation between the soul and body of the believer; yet there is none, no, not for a moment, between the Lord Jesus Christ, and his redeemed. This relationship holds good in the grave. It rots not in the dust. "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." (Rom. xiv. 8.)

*Secondly:*—It is by the virtue and efficacy of this relationship to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the bodies of the saints which sleep in Christ is secured. For where the head is, there must the members be. And this glorious fundamental truth was considered so infinitely important for the spiritual church of Christ to know, and to be firmly established in, that Jehovah, in his Trinity of persons, made proclamation of it by the prophet, in their conference with each other. "Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise; Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs; and the earth shall cast out her dead." (Isa. xxvi. 19.) It is no violence to those blessed words, to consider the former part as the words and promise of God the Father to the Son; for Christ being risen from the dead, is said thereby "to

become the first fruits of them that slept." (1 Cor. xv. 20.) Hence, here is the confirmation of the Father to the son : "Thy dead men shall live." The Son of God may be supposed to answer, and shew how : "Together with my dead body shall they arise ; " for his resurrection is the cause of their's. And lastly, as by the Spirit the souls of God's people are quickened from the death of sin; (Eph. ii. 1.) so by the Spirit dwelling in them, their bodies are said to be quickened from the death of the grave. (Rom. viii. 11.) Hence the call, " Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust ; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead." A most beautiful figure by way of demonstration. For, as in the wintry season of the year, of all the plants, none are so unpromising as the dry sticks of herbs ; and yet in the spring, from their root, new life is given to them ; and they put forth their verdure ; so the dead and dried bones of the Lord's people, dead and dry as they are, shall come forth from their graves, when Christ their root shall re-animate their bodies, by the dew of his sovereign and Almighty power.

*Thirdly :*—And as interesting a part as any, is the consideration which the doctrine of the resurrection proves ; namely, the identity of persons which arise, as when they descended into the grave. For as Christ, the glorious Head, arose the very same body as was put into the sepulchre, so shall his people. As was the Head, so are his members. This is stated somewhat at large in my *Poor Man's Commentary,* on the 1st of Corinthians, chap. xv ; and the quotation may not be unprofitable in this place.

Job proclaimed this truth ages before that redemption-work was accomplished by the resurrection of Christ. " I know (said he) that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy

this body yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, (for myself,) and not another (for me.)" And Paul most decidely confirms the same, under the authority of the Holy Ghost, when saying; "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Indeed, on the supposition, that this was not the case, the doctrine of the resurrection would cease to be. For if the Lord gave to his people a new body, this would be a creation, and not a resurrection. And where then would be the mystical body of Christ? Hence therefore, the very idea of the doctrine of the resurrection implies the identity of each person so raised. Wonderfully changed it will be indeed; being by the Lord himself prepared for the everlasting enjoyment of the Lord in glory; but the same body. It will be no longer the subject of sin, or sorrow; of temptation, or any evil; but as holy and without blame before the Lord for ever. It was sown a natural body: it will be raised a spiritual body. And as spirits are not liable to bodily infirmities; all the cares and disquietudes to which our flesh is heir in this mortal state, will be felt and feared no more. But identity will be preserved. So that the very person I now am, and the person that you now are, will then be the same. The hand that is writing these humble lines; and the eye that hereafter may read them, or the ear that may hear them read, will be the same. Changed from weakness to strength; and from dishonour to glory, we shall be: but personally the very beings we now are. Most blessedly the Holy Ghost hath declared this, and the church of God are assured of the reality. Jesus will "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself." (Philip. iii. 21.)

I must not forget the limits necessary to be observed in a work of this kind ; yet from the very interesting nature of the doctrine itself, which involves in its eventful consequences all our highest and best concerns, both for the life which now is, and of that which is to come ; I dare not close up the meditation which hath arisen from the view of the tomb of Sarah, without first desiring the reader to take with him one or two observations, which under divine teaching, may be found both pleasing and profitable.

And *first* :—As the redeemed and regenerated child of God ponders the subject, he may, yea, he ought to, contemplate (and that with full assurance of faith,) the holy joy with which the termination of the life is strewed with comforts to the people of God. The apostle Paul felt the consolations so abounding in the view, that he cried out in a rapture of triumph ; " I protest (said he) by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." (1 Cor. v. 31.) And in the same chapter, the man of God exults in a yet higher strain in the prospect of death, adopting the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, himself ; quoted from the prophet : " Death (said he) is swallowed up in victory ! O death where is thy sting ? O grave where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin : and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. xv. 54, 57. compared with Hosea xiii. 14.)

There is now no longer any sting in death : for " the sting of death is sin ; " and that being taken out, and the wound healed by the blood of Christ ; " when the iniquity of Israel is sought for there shall be none : and the sins of Judah shall not be found." (Jer. l. 20.) All that remains of death, is but the shadow of it : the substance is lost. A bee without a sting cannot hurt. A serpent deprived of his poison can do no

harm. Hence the Lord, comforting his people on this ground, very blessedly describes their state under the similitude of an "inhabitant, which shall no longer say I am sick; for the people that dwell therein are forgiven their iniquity." The city of our God hath this salubrious air, that there is no sickness in it unto death. All that dwell therein have their sins, (which is the bitterness of death) pardoned. (Isa. xxxiii. 24.) Hence we find the Lord's people in all ages, exulting in the deliverance. The Psalmist sings aloud in the consciousness: "Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." (Psalm ciii. 1, 4.)

*Secondly*:—As the sting of death, which is sin, is taken out by Christ's victory over both sin and death; so the whole train of evils, even all the deadly fruit of sin, which the redeemed of the Lord groan under, during the whole of their time-state upon earth, is for ever done away in the grave. The Holy Ghost, by his servant the prophet, very blessedly speaks of this, in one of his chapters, where he saith; "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart, and merciful men are taken away: none considering that the righteous are taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." (Isa. lvii. 1, 2.)

This is more than a negative kind of happiness, for it is a positive good, when the redeemed and regenerated child of God falls asleep in Jesus. For he is not only delivered from the very being of sin, but from all the painful fruits and effects of sin. All the head-aches and heart-aches of life are then over. No more groans will any longer be heard from the people of God. No

more the body of death, which an apostle complained of, and which all the Lord's family, like him, carry about with them through life, and complain of, can any longer assault. At death, the believer in Christ leaves the couch of sorrow, and the world itself, which is but one great hospital; and in the fullest sense of the word, "God had wiped away all tears from his eyes."

*Thirdly:* Neither is it the smallest part of the felicity of the blessed dead which die in the Lord, when sleeping in Jesus, that they are for ever got beyond the gun-shot of the enemy, and placed out of the reach of all the fiery darts of Satan. Very blessedly with an eye to this, is that love-call of the Lord, to his spouse the church, which we have in one of the songs: "Come with me from Lebanon my spouse, with me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon; from the lion's dens, from the mountains of leopards." (Song iv. 8.)

Surely, if an exemption from all the wiles of the devil, was the only mercy the faithful in Christ Jesus found in the asylum of the grave; it would be no small boon to the long harrassed and tempted soul. In what a sublime strain of expression, did Job recount the blessedness of the dead on this account, when having found such an harbour of repose; "there the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master." (Job iii. 17—19.)

And *fourthly:* To add no more; may it not be said with peculiar reference to the present awful day of rebuke and blasphemy, that there is a most distinguishing grace in our most faithful God to his faithful people, when at any time housing them, not only from sin and sorrow, and the powers of evil

spirits: but from the bold and unblushing infidelity of bad men, more dangerous than those spirits. We see them now come forth at noon day, "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." And if, as we are told of Lot, "that his righteous soul was vexed from day to day with the filthy conversation of the wicked;" what ought to be; yea, what is, and must be, the soul distresses of the Lord's people, at beholding what is continually going on in this land, in the very flood-gates of blasphemy being thrown open, and our streets deluged with the most horrid profanation of all the glorious truths of our God! True indeed, the Holy Ghost hath spoken expressly, that in "the latter days perilous times should come;" and that gracious Lord, hath marked the features in such characters for his people's notice, as renders it impossible to be mistaken that it is now. And tremendously awful as it is to contemplate those portentous signs of the present times; yet in the midst, the faithful find cause to bless God, for such living evidences of the truth of his holy Scriptures; without which we should need this testimony of the latter day. But while we find cause to fall down with reverence and godly fear for those proofs of divine truth, we find no less cause to fall down under the most distressful apprehensions for the eventful consequences of such daring ungodliness. Well is it for our guilty land, that the Lord hath left a few names in this our British Sardis, "which have not defiled their garments." (Rev. iii. 1. 4.) For surely, but for this, it might be said of this *nineteenth* century, as was said by the prophet in his times: "Except the Lord of Hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom; and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." (Isa. i. 9.)

How blessed then is it to the redeemed and rege-

nerated child of God, when from times so truly distressing to the best interests of the Lord's people, the Lord takes them home to himself, and removes them from the ways of the destroyer. And to those who look on, and delight to watch the Lord in his providences, as well as the Lord in his grace, it is worthy the observation, how strikingly the Lord hath appeared for his chosen, when perilous times have come. When the Lord destroyed the world by a flood; he first housed Noah in the Ark. When the Lord would rain fire and brimstone from heaven on Sodom; he first sent Lot out of the overthrow. And to come down to later times, when the Lord caused Jerusalem to be sacked by Titus Vespasian's army, he provided a little Zoar; a Pella, to receive his household. The church must be preserved. There shall be a seed to serve the Lord in the earth, as long as the sun and moon shall endure, from one generation to another. Hence, while taking home some, and preserving others; the whole church shall be in like safety. The Lord speaketh as expressly now as he did of old; and as he hath in all ages! "Sing ye to her, a vineyard of red wine; I the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." (Isa. xxvii. 2, 3.)

And now in folding up this record of Scripture history, and gathering into one comprehensive view the several very precious meditations which this family vault of the Lord's faithful people furnisheth, from the first interment of the patriarchs, to the latest period of the gospel of Christ; let the reader pause over the whole, and ponder well the subject as it personally concerns himself, and as it interests his own feelings.

Most blessedly hath the Holy Ghost himself, by his servant the apostle, written and proclaimed the monumental inscription of the Lord's chosen ones, for every tomb: "These all died in faith:" they died as

they had lived, "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." They substantiated things distant, as though near. They beheld Christ, and were convinced of Christ, and their interest in Christ as much as though they had lived in the days of Christ. That faith in Christ, acted as those glasses of modern times, which serve to magnify objects that are remote, and bring them home to nearer view. Hence one and the same character marked the prominent feature of the whole family in every age of the church: "They all die in faith." This forms their escutcheon, their breast-plate, their helmet, their shield. And however different the degrees of spiritual enjoyment of one more than another, the glorious truths themselves which form the object of faith, are the same to all. The Lord himself, who is both the *author* and *finisher* of faith, so firmly establisheth the conviction and knowledge of them in the renewed mind, that what was said of the patriarchs of old, is in effect said over the graves of all believers; "They all die in faith." They have seen the promises, are persuaded of them, and embrace them; and confess that they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth. They are looking for a better country, that is an heavenly; "wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city." (Heb. xi. 13. 16.)

I know not into whose hands these observations may fall; neither how they may be received, according to the complexion of the several readers who may peruse them. But this I know, that if the Lord, the Holy Ghost, shall be graciously pleased to give an unction with them, (as far as they are agreeable to his own eternal truths,) they will be found ministering to this great end, in shewing that the same way by which holy men of old, triumphed over death and the grave, can be the only way to form the triumphs of the faithful now.

A long series of nearly six thousand years hath run out since the fall of man! And every renewed instance of mortality proclaims with as loud a voice as when the first trangressor died, the same trembling and irreversible sentence; "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.) The first sinner entailed this inheritance upon all his children. He did not, for he could not, as some fathers do by their worldly substance, divide the inheritance between them, or give a portion of it to one more than to another. His estate of sin and death became alike the property of each individual, and of all; as if he had but one child. By virtue of which, the whole are equally involved in one and the same lot; and all are under the same sin, and the same condemnation. "In Adam, all die."

Hence therefore, as from our first father in nature, both by headship and by generation, we derive original sin, and with it, all its tremendous consequences of misery and death; so by headship, and by regeneration, the spiritual seed in Christ derive all the blessedness and benefits which are in him. The whole guilt of sin is in our whole nature by the fall of our first man Adam; and the whole of life, and holiness, and happiness we have, is in the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ: by virtue of which, the whole church of Christ is made alive. To this purport the Holy Ghost comforts the people of God, in that blessed Scripture by the apostle: "For if through the offence of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one: much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one,

judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous. See Romans v. throughout.

And if happily, the reader by regeneration is brought into a new and spiritual life, and is taught of God; if he be enabled to realize in his own soul, spiritual and scriptural apprehensions of these glorious truths; if from the blessed manifestations of the love of God to his own soul, as that love is shewn by all the persons in the Godhead to himself, as he is in Christ; such a life of faith, of personal communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit, will make him rise triumphant over all the fears of sin and death; and induce one uniform, fixed, and settled principle, of joy and peace in believing, abounding in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.

And it will be very blessed in the daily walk of this life of faith, if the redeemed and regenerated soul, be enabled to familiarize (what to carnal men becomes the very bane of their existence,) an holy acquaintance with death, and do as the apostle did; die daily; I mean, to accustom himself to make constant visits to the grave, before the hour arrives of his abiding there; I can assure the child of God, the subject is in it itself, the very reverse of being gloomy, for it hath many charms in it. For my own part, I find it at times the sweetest of all meditations; and under the unction of the Holy Ghost, a most sovereign relief to many a distressing circumstance, which would otherwise become painful, as it relates both to my soul and body.

In relation to the soul, the prospect of death, when that death hath lost all its terrors, in the conscious assurance of an union with Christ; (which is the pri-

vilege of every redeemed and regenerated child of God,) there is nothing but what is calculated to bring comfort. And in relation to the body of the redeemed and regenerated child of God, the unconcious state of sleep, during the interval from death to the resurrection, renders the event much less formidable than might otherwise have been supposed. Passing over the act of death itself, which in numberless instances is made without a groan, and to the true believer in Christ, can never be without the most soothing accompaniments; there is nothing that remains to give alarm. And the expectation of a glorious immortality which will take place when the body that is sown in weakness shall be raised in power; and that which is sown a natural body, will be raised a spiritual body; brings with it such an accession of advantage, as teacheth the believer to lose sight of the dishonour of the grave, in the prospect of the glory which is to follow.

Let me only add one observation more, and I will relieve the reader's attention; and I hope he will give me credit for the truth of it, when I say; that the concluding note of this little work, which if he be among the redeemed and regenerated church of Christ, I recommend to his attention. I have found, and do find among the sweetest employments of my own. I mean, when with the patriarch,we can commit the remains of the Lord's people to the dust; and look forward with the same assurance of faith, for our being also laid there, and say as he did, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you; give me the possession of a burial place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

The looking forward to the junction again of soul and body, after the separation made by death, both united in one, and both in the Lord; opens the most blessed and sublime subject, the renewed child of God can contemplate this side eternity. Who shall de-

scribe; yea, what imagination is competent even to conceive, with what holy rapture and joy, the soul and body of the redeemed of the Lord shall fly to each other: and from an union with the glorious Head, shall be formed in one, never more to be separated, but contituted one in him for evermore.

And this is heightened to a still higher degree for our spiritual enjoyment by faith, when we consider how the powers of attraction from the glorious Head to his members are exercised, in uniting all, both soul and body of his people, to himself, that where he is there they shall be also. The Son of God, having taken our nature into union with his divine; and by both, becoming one Christ; draws all to himself, as he said he would, when he was lifted up. (John xii. 32.) And this is special and peculiar to the persons of his people, from having such a nature as his own. Angels know nothing of this; and (speaking with reverence) it may be said, they can know nothing of it. Upheld they are by Christ. They are kept by Christ. But as elect angels thus upheld, and kept with every other blessing, is in a way of *dominion*. The church is in a way of *union*. There is a kindred relationship the church hath to her glorious Head and Husband, from a participation of the same nature; being members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Hence in the resurrection morn, the bodies of the Lord's people in the dust, will not be raised by the mere sovereign power of God: but by that attraction as of our head to the members of the body; by which, as he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; there must be an everlastng union of Christ, with his people; and as he said himself; "Because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.)

In the believing view of this, the Lord grant to him that now writes, and to every redeemed and regenerated child of God, that may read, the daily

assurance of faith so to live; and when the hour appointed comes, so to die. The grave hath lost all its terrors by the death of Christ. Yea, the Lord Jesus, by sleeping there, hath converted the grave into a chamber of repose; and left a rich perfume from his own most holy and unperishable body to sanctify ours. I know not, neither do I desire to know; (yea, I bless God that the secret is kept from me,) when, and where I am to die; but I blessedly wait in hope: "all the days of my appointed time will I wait until my change come." What, if my departure be amidst weakness, and all the feelings of frail nature; yet sure I am, "in my flesh I shall see God." And the cold clammy sweat of death, (if so be) which the body feels, when the soul is separating from the body, will be suceeded when the night of death is over, with that everlasting morning of light and life, and joy; when arising a glorified body, "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing;" for the Lord will be my everlasting light, and my God my glory. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again; even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

# JOSEPH

## MAKING HIMSELF KNOWN

## TO HIS BRETHREN.

### HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

And he wept aloud; and the Egyptians and the house of Pharoah heard.

And Joseph said unto his bethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence."—(Gen. xlv. 1—3.)

### NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

In all the compass of history, and in all the annals of mankind, never, among the sons of Adam, hath the world produced a single memoir, so truly great, amiable and interesting, as that of the patriarch Joseph. And as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, none among the patriarchs, prophets, or apostles, hath in so many and various points been set forth to the delight and contemplation of the lovers of biblical study, as "Joseph the Hebrew." (Gen. xxxix. 14.)

That portion of the word of God which is placed at the head of this chapter, and which invites the church to meditate on one of the most interesting moments in the life of Joseph, is neither the beginning, nor the close of his history.

In order to enter into an apprehension of this part of the patriarch's life, and as far we are able also to enter into his feelings on the occasion; we must take a retrospect of some of the occurrences which went before. And the view will amply reward our attention: in not only giving us an history, the relation of several very interesting events which took place in those first ages of the world; but, which is infinitely more to our benefit and comfort, will open to us what the Holy Ghost, above every other consideration, intended from Joseph's history, namely, in setting him forth a beautiful type and figure, on various occasions, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Not however, to run over too large a tract of ground on this subject, it will be fully sufficient for our present purpose, to take up Joseph's history from the time that his father sent him to Shechem, to enquire after the health of his brethren; and to see whether it were well with them, and with the flocks. For from hence arose, in a way of the Lord's providence, all the after events which marked Joseph's life. (Gen. xxxvii. 13. &c.)

And I the rather open at this part of the history, because we here find Joseph very strikingly shadowing forth some of the outlines of our Lord Jesus Christ. For, as when the patriarch came to his brethren, they cast him into the pit, and afterwards sold him for a slave; in those transactions we trace the resemblance, though but faint compared to the original, of the Lord. As Joseph, the son of Jacob, was sent by his father to visit his brethren; so the Son of God was sent by our father from the realms of bliss, into this our world Shechem, to see if it were well with us, and how we fared. And when with all the affection of a brother, Jesus came to his own; "his own received him not," but conspired against him to slay him. And as Joseph was cast

into the pit, and afterwards sold for twenty pieces of silver; so was the Lord of life and glory betrayed, sold for thirty peices of silver, crucified, and slain; and from the pit, and the prison, wrought out the salvation of all his people. The advance of Joseph, which afterwards took place in the court of Pharoah, became an exact resemblance of him, who though "making his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, (as the prophet speaks,) because he had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth;" (Isa. liii. 9.) yet by his ascension at the right hand of the Majesty on high, manifested "that all power was his, in heaven and on earth." (Matt. xxviii. 18.)

In passing on through the history of Joseph, not to go over any more of it than is necessary to connect the whole with that part, the Scripture here relates his interview with his brethren. We next find him advanced as a steward in the house of Potiphar, Captain of the king's guard. (See Gen. xxxix. throughout.) And here I detain the reader just to remark, how graciously the Lord was watching over him. Every step which we tread in Joseph's history, we may behold this strikingly exemplified. The subject opened with what appeared to have been the tenderest of all possible causes, to bring about such events as followed in his life. Who could have thought that Jabob sending him merely to enquire after his brethren's health, should have been the means of his being carried into Egypt? Who that beheld him sold for a slave, by his unnatural brethren, would have concluded that this was but the very method the Lord would over-rule for his advancement to honour? Nay, to drop Joseph's history for the moment, and look higher, even to Joseph's Lord and Saviour; who that beheld Christ on the cross, would have understood that the cross and death of the Lord

Jesus, should be made the life and happiness of the Lord's people to all eternity? It is blessed to have such things in constant remembrance. Every redeemed and regenerated child of God should be on the look out, on the tower, as the prophet we read of was, to wait the Lord's manifestations to his people. For it is a truth confirmed by the testimony of the Lord's people in all ages, that they that watch the Lord, both in providence and grace, will often find that the Lord is everlastingly watching over them. (Hab. ii. 1. Isa. xxvii. 3.) It is blessed to be well versed in our own history. When the Lord had been teaching his people Israel through a long psalm, to recount his mercies over them; he closeth the whole in those blessed words:—"Whoso is wise, and will observe these things; even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." (Psalm cvii. 43.)

Prosecuting still the subject of Joseph's history, until we arrive to that part of it, which the Scripture before us represents, of making himself known unto them in the first interview, after their unnatural conduct to him; we next find him advanced from the house of Potiphar, to the court of Pharaoh; and become governor over all the land of Egypt. In this situation, he is selling corn, from the plentiful granaries he had, by the wisdom given him by the Lord, stored up in Egypt; and enriching Pharaoh with the profitable sale. Among the numerous applications made for corn, by the several nations around, we find the sons of Jacob constrained to come from Canaan to purchase; and the brethren of Joseph, unconscious before whom they presented themselves, applied to him whom they had so cruelly treated, and bowed down before him, to obtain permission to buy corn among those that came.

I stay not to remark the many striking incidents which formed this part of the history. The patriarch,

from the moment they appeared before him, knew them, though they had forgotten him. He contrived to detain them, by first speaking to them roughly, as though they were spies; and then sending the whole home except one of them, whom he kept as an hostage, with corn for their house. Having (as if he himself was ignorant who they were, and from whence they came,) contrived to get his younger brother down; and now at this second coming into Egypt, he did as the Scripture above relates, he made himself known unto his brethren, and called forth their wonder, fear and dismay, which is expressed, when it is said, "they were troubled," (or as the margin renders it,) *terrified* at his presence. The whole is related in that beautiful simplicity, by the sacred historian, as is impossible to read, but with the most sensible emotions. I cannot however in a work of this kind, venture to enlarge; and therefore refer the reader to the Scripture itself. (Gen. xlii. xliii. and xliv.)

Before I enter upon the more immediate subject proposed in this number, of the interview of Joseph with his brethren, I beg to offer an observation or two upon that part which I have merely glanced at, by way of introduction. In the *first* place, in the view of Joseph's knowledge of his brethren, while they were altogether unconscious of him; we may gather a very sweet spiritual instruction, and of the most consolatory nature. How little doth the child of God apprehend who it is that he hath to deal with, when under a sense of spiritual famine of soul, he is seeking the bread of life for himself and household. How little is he sensible, that although he knows not Jesus, yet Jesus knows him!

While the leadings of the Lord are upon him; and like the sons of Jacob, he finds himself constrained to seek the bread of life, that perisheth not with using,

how exactly is his case like theirs; in that he knows not in this Governor over all, he hath a brother born for adversity, and one that makes his case his own! And while to his view the Lord apparently, as Joseph did to his brethren, is making himself strange, and speaking roughly to him; the whole of his dispensations are full of grace; and love is in all he saith, and all he doth towards him. The redeemed and regenerated child of God, will do well never to lose sight of this, in all his drawings nigh to the mercy-seat. He that is in the midst of the throne, is of one mind, and none can change him. However outward providences may seem to frown; an everlasting sunshine is on the Lord's countenance. The clouds which sometimes obscure the bright shining of the day, do indeed affect the earth below, but to angels which dwell above, nothing can create gloom in their atmosphere.

And let me add a *second* observation from the incidents already glanced at in this history of Joseph and his brethren. When we hear them uttering their convictions of guilt when in private, concerning their cruel treatment of their brother, (Gen. xlii. 21.) we learn, how graciously the Lord deals with sinners, in awakening the remembrances of guilt in their consciences. And this is what the Lord Jesus, in after ages, more openly explained of the work of God the Holy Ghost: "He shall reprove the world (said Christ,) of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." (John xvi. 8.) And when by harrowing up the fallow ground of the sinner's heart, the Lord the Spirit hath prepared for the spiritual seed; then how blessed is it when the Lord brings health to the soul, in shewing the efficacy of "the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin!" (John i. 7.)

From these views we have taken of the history of the patriarch before his making himself known unto

his brethren; we shall now I hope be the better prepared to enter upon that most interesting relation given us in the Scripture, in which it is said: "Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren."

The *first* beautiful incident which strikes the mind in this relation, is the mind of the patriarch, wound up to such a state of feeling, as overwhelmed him in a manner perfectly irresistible. His brother Judah, who pleaded before him for the liberation of Benjamin, so touched all the finer feelings of Joseph's heart, that in the contemplation of Joseph's father, hastening to the close of life, and worn down with age and infirmities, the bowels of Joseph yearned over the view. Judah had most pathetically called it forth, and Joseph could no longer refrain. And the first vent he had power to give to his bosom, full of contending passions, was the cry: "Cause every man to go out from me." Not that it would have been unseemly in the governor of Egypt, to be found in tears at such an event as the discovery of his brethren. Tears are graceful, when the subject which excites them are graceful. But Joseph sent away all that were among the strangers or servants of his household. They could not enter into his feelings, or take part in what belonged only to the interests of his family. And beside these things, Joseph knew what would be the immediate effect on the minds of his brethren, when the secret was made known to them that he was their brother. Unwilling therefore that they should be put to confusion, or be interrupted by uninteresting lookers on; he first commanded the strangers and servants to depart, before he unbosomed himself to tell them who he was; and how much, notwithstanding their past conduct, he loved them.

Language fails to furnish any suitable and affecting apprehensions of what such a scene must have produced in the discovery of Joseph to his brethren: when he said, "I am Joseph!" and when he instantly added to it; "doth my father yet live?" The transition from himself to his father, and the affectionate child-like enquiry he made concerning his father, is among the most finished examples of pathetic feeling. He did not ask the question for information; for they had before told him (when in the former conversation he had with them, he had asked for their father, and the welfare of their house,) that he was in good health, (Gen. xliii. 27.) but it was that kind of asking a question already answered, to shew the delight he took in dwelling upon it. And the weeping aloud, which accompanied the declaration of himself who he was, and of the love he had to his father, until the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard, and were informed of the pleasing relation; all these would open to some very interesting subjects, that if greater and more highly important were not before us in the view of this transaction, we might not unprofitably dwell upon. But when we have turned from the consideration of these things, there is one sweet and gracious improvement, and of a spiritual kind, which as much transcends those scenes of natural affection as the heavens are higher than the earth.

Perhaps the reader may himself, from his own spiritual apprehensions, (if so be he hath been taught of God,) judge what I mean; and if not, he will confess that the thing itself is so superlatively blessed above every other discovery, when I relate it to him, that this of Joseph making himself known to his brethren, sinks to nothing in comparison thereof. Let the reader thus figure to himself the Lord Jesus Christ, making himself known to his brethren, or to any, and every one of his brethren, after their long hatred of

God by sin ; and being enemies to God by wicked works. Who shall describe the wonderful discovery when first day-light dawns in upon the sinner's soul ; and he gets even but a glimpse of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the saviour of sinners? Oh! who shall take upon him to describe what passeth at that moment in the sinner's heart, in the thousand and ten thousand instances of it, which have been from age to age, and still continues to be ; and will continue till time shall be no more, when the Lord Jesus Christ makes himself known to his redeemed ones ; and saith, "I am your brother!"

Let us not pass away from this interesting scene, so full as it is of spiritual improvement, without taking one short glimpse more of it. Did Joseph before the discovery of himself to his brethren, command every other person of those uninterested in the event to go out from him? And do we not see in this, the portrait of Him, who suffers none to know what passeth between him, and the souls of his redeemed, when he "manifests himself to them, otherwise than he doth to the world?" And when Jesus gives that "bread in secret, which none knoweth, saving him that receiveth it," (Rev. ii. 17.) speak, ye humble souls, who have known, and can testify to those truths of God, in your hearts. Say, when the Lord Jesus comes to you in the word of his grace, melts your cold minds, and warms your frozen affections ; takes away the heart of stone, and gives you hearts of flesh : who looks on, and knows the sweet and blessed transactions? The man of Uz hath expressed these precious secrets of the soul, under a similitude most beautiful and striking, when he saith, "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen. The lion's whelps have not trodden it ; nor the fierce lion passed by it." (Job xxviii. 7, 8.) And how unknown is that path of the Lord, in which he makes himself known to his

redeemed ones. Jacob found this when, awakening from his first vision at Bethel, he cried out, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. Surely this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" (Gen. xxviii. 16, 17.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

"Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.

"For these two years have the famine been in the land; and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

"And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

"So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God; and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." (Gen. xlv. 8—12.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

THERE is a great deal of tenderness manifested by Joseph towards his brethren, in this repeated invitation of his. Probably he saw their shame and confusion of face in the moment he had made himself known unto them, and their backwardness to come to him. He therefore aims to remove all fear from their minds in the assurance that he was as much their brother, as though they had never been unkind to him. He bids them not only to come to him, but come *near* to me, said he, I pray you.

But while I read these words of the patriarch with pleasure, and love him for his love to his poor self-condemned brethren: and yet more bless the God of all grace for such grace given to Joseph to do so; I find

my mind instinctively led away from the court of Egypt, to the court of heaven: and lose sight of Joseph's tenderness in the unmeasurable tenderness I there discover of Joseph's Lord, to his poor self-condemned brethren. How blessedly is this expressed in those unequalled words of our God and Saviour, by the prophet: "Come ye near to me, and hear ye this I have not spoken in secret from the beginning, from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me. Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit; which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." (Isa. xlviii. 16, 17.) Surely, the tenderness contained in those endearing words of our most gracious Christ, could they be felt by sinners, would remove all fear in approaching him. Observe how exactly corresponding they are to his personal call to the broken hearted in the days of his flesh, when he said, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Mat. ii. 28.) And I hope while the reader cannot but admire the great condescension of the Lord in both these passages of Scripture, he will not overlook the decided testimony the former of them gives to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Here, as in numberless other places of the sacred writings, we have a farther proof, that "there are Three which bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." (1 John v. 7.) For here is the Son of God, declaring the eternity of his nature and essence, when saying; "from the beginning, from the time that it was; there am I." (John viii. 5.) And next of his incarnate state, sent by the Father and the Holy Ghost.

But how doth the patriarch's love sink to nothing, in the view of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, which passeth knowledge: and when we look at both in the

comparative statement! Joseph while he invited his brethren to come near him, reminded them of what had passed, and which rendered them so undeserving of it. "I am Joseph your brother, (said he) whom ye sold into Egypt." But what were the words of our Lord Jesus Christ to his brethren, after he arose from the dead; yea, and from that death which their sins, and the sins of all his people had rendered necessary for their salvation? We find not a word of reproof, or upbraiding in all he said; "Go, tell my brethren, that I am risen from the dead." Nay, more than this; for as Peter had denied Christ before his crucifixion, he will have the glad tidings, particularly, and above all, communicated to him: "Go, tell my disciples and Peter." (Mark xvi. 7.) As if knowing what Peter had felt, and the bitter weeping of his soul at that baseness; the apostle might say when he heard the joyful tidings of Christ's resurrection; I am not interested in it, for I denied him; and justly therefore may he now deny me. No, saith the Lord, let Peter be the first to know it: "Go, tell the disciples and Peter!" Oh! the grace, the boundless grace, in the bowels of our Lord Jesus Christ! Methinks I would have every poor sinner, who feels and groans under the plague of his own heart, never to lose sight of this tenderness, in our most tender Lord Christ. To every such an one I would say, my brother! what though you and I have done more than Joseph's brethren did by selling him for a slave; for by our sins we have nailed him to the cross, yet doth the heart of Jesus yearn over all his people, and saith in words infinitely more endearing than Joseph to his brethren; Come *near* unto me, I pray you; I am your brother. Oh! for grace to believe the record which God hath given of his dear Son.

After the reader hath paid all due attention to that part of Joseph's history with that of his brethren,

which we have already gone over ; I would call upon him to attend to that part which is before us in these verses : I mean, where Joseph endeavours to soften the anger which no doubt in times past had arisen in their minds, and which now again he supposed might afflict them in the recollection, and to call off their attention from themselves to see the Lord's hand in the appointment : " Now therefore (said he) be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land ; and yet there are five years more, in which there shall be neither earing nor harvest. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God."

This address and representation of the patriarch, was happily chosen for the kind and affectionate purpose Joseph had in view ; and still more for accomplishing a much higher end in directing their mind to cease from man, and to look to God. Truly there was cause enough for the most bitter reproaches to take to themselves through life, for a proceeding so cruel and unnatural as they had committed against their brother. And though the Lord over-ruled it for good, yet their intention was not the less evil. But the mind of Joseph, through grace, looked higher than to second causes. He eyed the Lord's hand in all. What a world of expression is contained in this short sentence the patriarch used on the occasion ; " So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God."

I dare not dismiss this view of the greatness and nobleness of Joseph's mind before that I have first desired the reader to ask grace from God, to adopt similar conduct amidst the numberless occasions which give opportunity for the exercise of it in the life. It is very blessed, when through grace, in time of trial, we are enabled to forget the instrument, and see the hand which appoints ; and under the injuries or oppressions

of men, discover the over-ruling of all providences by the Lord. Who would have thought, had they seen the anguish of soul in Joseph, when separated from his brethren, and brought down into Egypt for a slave, that this was the very way by which the Lord would bring about his purposes, to raise him from the obscure situation of Jacob's son, and make him governor of Egypt? Who, that heard the afflicted father exclaim on the supposed death of one son, and the detention of another: "Me have ye bereaved of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not; all these things are against me;" that all these things were for him, and leading to the preservation of himself, and all his family? Nay, in an infinitely higher concern to which the history of Joseph is as nothing. Who that beheld the Son of God on the cross, would have thought that that cross should be the believer's joy; and the death of Christ, the life of his people for evermore? Sweet is that blessed Scripture given by the Holy Ghost to the church; and proper to be kept in view for every occasion of exercise; "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God: to them that are the called according to his purpose." (Rom. viii. 28.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him: Thus saith thy son Joseph: God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not.

"And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me; thou and thy children, and thy children's children; and thy flocks and thy herds, and all that thou hast.

"And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine, lest thou and thy household and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

"And behold your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.

"And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

"And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

"Moreover, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them; and after that, his brethren talked with him." (Gen. xlv. 9.)

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

Who but must admire the tender feelings of Joseph, with all the affectionate regard of a child toward a parent, which he here expressed in the moment he was pouring forth the love of his heart toward his brethren! He had felt no doubt, a thousand anxious moments concerning what his father felt at his supposed death, not only the many years that had passed since he left him at his father's command to go and enquire after the health of his brethren at Shechem; but also all the while since his brethren had first come to Egypt to buy food, and had returned without Simeon, and had come again. Under all these impressions, the the heart of Joseph felt for his father, and he cried out as soon as he had made himself known unto his brethren; Haste, (said he) and go up to my father, and tell him all you know concerning me. Say that I am not only alive, but governor over all the land of Egypt, and blessed of our gracious covenant God, to preserve him and all his from famine.

When the reader hath pondered over this view of the subject, let him connect with it one infinitely higher, and behold the Lord Jesus, when from his cross exalted to his throne, sending to call his own to himself, that "where he is, there they might be also." Our Lord Jesus cannot be content to enjoy his Father's presence *alone*. He must have all his redeemed with him. His language is, "Father, I will, that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the

foundation of the world." (John xvii. 24.) I cannot pass away from this part of the subject, without first stopping to behold the affectionate salutation and the weeping over of each other of Joseph and Benjamin. These were indeed brothers by one and the same mother. Rachael their mother had died upon the birth of Benjamin, and she called him *Benoni,* which signifies, "the son of my sorrow," in consequence of it. So that in beholding Benjamin, Joseph beheld his mother, the only representative beside himself of his beloved mother. Hence it is said, they fell upon each other's neck, and wept. Yea, Joseph wept upon the neck of all his brethren, and blessed them. Say what the world will, there is somewhat very precious and costly in the tears of nature. I love them. I love to see them. Even in the moment I am now writing, a period of at least three thousand years since this interview of Joseph with his brethren, the tears are dropping from my eyes as I write the lines concerning it. I can and do enter into the feelings of this gracious family and weep with them. We weep in the sympathy of our common nature. Oh! when I add to this view, the assurance that the Son of God hath taken union into himself with this nature, and mingled his tears with ours, I consider the tearful drop which falls from the eye of the child of God when called forth by grace, as more lovely than "the dew of the morning, or the spiced wine of the pomegranate."

I detain the reader to admire another endearing feature in the character of Joseph. "Haste ye (said he) and bring down my father, and I will nourish him and his; lest he and his household come to poverty." How graciously hath the Lord arranged the events of life for giving exercise to all the finer feelings of our nature. Ruined and undone as we are all by the fall, the common wants and endearments of nature

remain. They are indeed by reason of the mighty injury sustained in our first father's apostacy lessened and defaced in numberless instances; but like the ruins of some ancient temple, enough remains of the sculptured monuments and majestic columns to shew what it once was, and in a what state of overthrow it now is. And when we see, as that we do see in the example of Joseph to his father; and even now and then in life, degenerate as the age is, here and there the child of years returning, to the hoary and helpless parent, some of the solicitude shewn to his infant state, when that infant state could not help himself; we take part in the mercy, and bless God, that amidst all the unworthiness of man, the Lord hath not left himself without witness in the earth.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the fame thereof was heard in Pharoah's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come; and it pleased Pharoah well, and his servants.

"And Pharoah said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye, lade your beasts and go, get you unto the land of Canaan.

"And take your father and your household and come unto me, and I will give you of the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land.

Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt, for your little ones, and for your wives; and bring your father and come.

"Also regard not your stuff, for the good of the land of Egypt is yours.

"And the children of Israel did so, and Joseph gave them wagons according to the commandment of Pharoah, and gave them provisions for the way.

"To all of them, he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of raiment.

"And to his father he sent after this manner: ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt; and ten she asses laden with corn, and bread and meat, for his father by the way.

"So he sent his brethren away; and they departed, and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way." (Gen. xlv. 16.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I ADMIRE the generosity of Pharoah and his servants. Joseph had been instrumental in saving Pharoah and his kingdom from famine; and he rejoiced in being useful to Joseph and his family. How the Lord maketh men who know him not, the unconscious instruments of serving his chosen! "The earth helped the woman." (Rev. xii. 16.) Even in his common providences, he over-ruleth all things for his people's welfare. Upon another remarkable occasion, we find the Lord thus speaking; "Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler." (Isaiah xvi. 4.) Moab, like Egypt, was of the world, and by nature an enemy to the Lord's people. But though a foe to the people of God, God will over-rule the mind of Moab to take care of them when they need it. They shall be housed, sheltered, fed, and nourished, and have all suited supplies; for though outcasts, they are still the Lord's outcasts.

There is somewhat very striking also in what Pharoah commanded concerning Jacob's stuff. He was to bring nothing with him, for the good of the land of Egypt should be his. Hence we may gather a sweet scriptural and spiritual improvement. When we come to Christ, we must bring nothing of our stuff with us. Christ is treasure and fulness enough for all his people. Hence with an eye to this, we find one of old triumphing in God's holiness, in his Gilead and Manasseh, and Ephraim. "Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim, who is the strength of my head." (Psalm lx. 7.) So the redeemed and regenerated child of God may say, and ought to say

in Christ's holiness; Christ is mine; God is mine: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; all are mine; "for all is your's, (saith the apostle,) for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.)

The generosity of Pharaoh was farther manifested in ordering wagons to be sent with the brethren of Joseph, for the conveyance of Jacob's family into Egypt; and thus we see, how the Lord, who hath the hearts of all men at his disposal, and like rivers of water turneth them whithersoever he pleaseth; maketh all things minister to his people's good, as occasion requires. And the same is every day carried on in life, however inattentive the Lord's people are to the Lord's watchful care over them. I find it always good when through grace I can have these things in remembrance. For it heightens every blessing, be that blessing what it may, when the Lord's hand is seen in it, and in the appointment of it. And even when a reverse of circumstances takes place, and things are unpromising and frowning; when to speak in the language of this Scripture, there are no wagons for our conveyance, nor accommodation for the way; still while I am enabled to keep an eye fixed on the Lord Jesus; sure I am, his presence will go with me, and give me rest. I am only a sojourner here below, as all my fathers were. And what signifieth the coarseness or scantiness of the fare to the way-faring man, that turneth in but to tarry for the night? to morrow he leaves the present place for another, and all the ill-accommodations on the road; as a pilgrim hastening on, or the soldier on his march, will trouble him no more. "The Lord is my shepherd, (said one of old,) I shall not want." (Psalm xxiii. 1.)

We must not overlook the present Joseph sent to his father; neither the tokens of love he gave to his brethren. The larger gifts to Benjamin. It was

natural for him so to do, for he was nearer to him than the rest; and though as is plain from the records of the patriarch's family, Benjamin could have been but an infant when Joseph was driven from his home; and therefore all remembrance of his person must have been lost; yet Benjamin was Joseph's own mother's son, and in him, he beheld her. The changes of raiment became no unapt representation of the spiritual raiment the Lord gives his people, when after the work of grace wrought in their hearts, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; the Lord gives them "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (Isa. lxi. 3.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And they went up out of Egypt, and came unto the land of Canaan, unto Jacob their father.

"And told him saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt.

"And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

"And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them; and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.

"And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die." (Gen. xlv. 25—28.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

If I invert the order of history in this part which is now before us, it is but with a view to raise a spiritual improvement from it. The sons of Jacob went up out of Egypt to the land of Canaan, to bring down their father from thence: but the wagons of ordinances the church of the Lord useth, is to carry the Lord's family from the Egypt of this world, to the heavenly

Canaan of our Father's house, which is above. True, indeed, like the patriarch, the first relation of the scriptural intelligence that our spiritual Joseph is the Lord of the country; and not only governor over all the land, but everlasting and eternal Lord of heaven and earth, appears too great to be believed; but when through sovereign grace, we are taught to believe the record God hath given of his dear Son; we then enter into a scriptural apprehension of the blessed truth; and "believing, we have life through his name."

The poor old Jacob, when first the news reached him of his son Joseph being yet alive, believed it not. He was rejoiced to see Simeon returned, and Benjamin returned; but that Joseph was yet in the land of the living, whom he had so long supposed to have been dead; and not only in the land of the living, but advanced to a state whereby as he now saw, he and his house had been kept from starving; and to whom he is now in his old age constrained to go; oh! what an exercise was here for faith. Similar to all these things, only in a more eminent degree, is the faith which is needful for the full enjoyment of the Lord, in relation to ourselves, when we are taught that all our sins are pardoned, and our persons fully, freely, and everlastingly accepted before God in the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet this, like the patriarch's belief is attainable, when the redeemed and regenerated child of God is brought to bottom all on what God hath said; and no longer to confer with the presumptuous reasoning of flesh and blood. It was this which made Abraham's faith so very memorable; and for which he stands forth a monument in the church of Christ, as the great father of the faithful to all generations. God promised him a son. There were many things in the way, which seemed to run counter to the accomplishment of this promise, as if God's designs should be thwarted. But all these operated nothing with

the patriarch. God had promised. That was enough. "He, against hope, believed in hope. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what God had promised, he was also able to perform." (Rom. iv. 1. 8.) And without all doubt, God is most honoured in our simple dependance upon his word in Christ, when matters in ourselves are most dark and discouraging. Then it is, as if God should graciously say: Do you believe me? See then, if what I have said and promised, doth not assuredly come to pass.

We have a beautiful illustration of this, in the case of the poor widow of Zarephath, trusting the prophet Elijah, as the man of God, for a supply of food, when in a time of great dearth in the land. The story is related to us in all its beautiful simplicity, in the iid Kings, chap. xvii. to which I refer. I would only just observe upon it, that when (as the case is stated) she came forth from her humble cot, and met the prophet at the gate of the city, all the stock she had in the world, was an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruise; and she was going to gather a few sticks, that she might make a cake of it for herself and her son; and then eat it and die. But when the prophet, as the man of God, bid her fear not, but go and do as she had said; only to make him a cake first, and bring it to him; though he backed this order with the assurance, and in the name of the Lord; that neither the barrel of meal, nor the cruise of oil should fail, until the day that the Lord should send rain upon the earth; what an illustrious act of faith was here in this poor woman in believing it! Now the Lord hath not recorded this history for nothing. Certainly the whole is intended to say, that if this poor widow thus trusted the prophet for the sustenance of herself and household, against all the unpromising circumstances

with which she was then commanded to do it, what infinite cause have the Lord's people to trust the Lord God of the prophets, through life and death, for time and eternity. "Though he slay me, (said Job,) yet will I trust in him." (Job xiii. 15.)

Jacob's resolution, when satisfied what he saw was real, that he would go to Egypt, and see his son Joseph once more before his death, is as interesting a part of the history as any. Nature is wound up as high as it can go. Neither his age, nor all the difficulties in the way, shall stop the father from gratifying his eyes on looking upon his son. It is enough, Israel said, Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die.

Who shall take upon him to describe all that passed in the patriarch's mind from the finer feelings both of nature and grace upon this occasion, when the father made this resolution of going to see his long-lost child before his death? No doubt numberless thoughts revolved in his mind, as the subject engaged his affection in the various ways in which it appeared to him. A life so checquered as Jacob's had been, from the first manifestations of divine love made to him at Bethel, to the almost now close of his pilgrimage; could not fail to have called forth a thousand images to his recollection, of what had passed in the course of his life, in sharp and trying exercises amidst continued tokens of divine love. "Few and evil, (as the patriarch afterward said to Pharoah,) have the days of the years of my life been." (Gen. xlvii. 9.) It is always blessed to connect the past and present of our warfare; when that past and that present brings with it so many tokens of Divine love as landmarks to the mariner to sail by. Faith not only by this finds great blessedness in the past; but derives great strength for the future. When the Holy Ghost, as the Remembrancer of Christ Jesus, turns back the leaves of our

past history, directs to this and that page to note, and shews the close of each chapter blessed by the Lord, as well in God's providence, as God's grace; the heart forms conclusions of encouragement from the whole; and in seeing how the Lord hath led us upon all former occasions, we take confidence that the same Lord will carry us on to the end. "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Psalm xxiii. 6.) This eminently marked the life of Jacob. God's first promise to him at Bethel was to this amount, after having made known to him who he was as the Lord God of Abraham, and of Isaac: "Behold, said the Lord, I am with thee." And the Lord added; "and I will keep thee in all places whither thou goest." And still farther: "and I will bring thee again into this land." Neither was this all; "for (said the Lord,) I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." (Gen. xxviii. 10. throughout.) It is the privilege of all Jacob's spiritual seed to live in this assurance of faith, and to say with the apostle; "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Tim. i. 12.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba; and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.

"And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night; and said Jacob! Jacob! and he said, Here am I.

"And he said, I am God, the God of thy father; fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation.

"I will go down with thee into Egypt, and I will also surely bring thee up again; and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes." (Gen. xlvi. 1—4.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

As we prosecute the history; and in imagination are taking part in events so remote from the present day of the church; and accompanying the patriarch with all that he had towards Egypt; we find cause to bless God the Holy Ghost, in that he hath recorded several very interesting events which occurred in the way, and which open to a spiritual mind, taught of God, much pleasure. It is blessed to trace the hand of God, in the ordering of Jacob's journey: we see so much of God in it: and we take part in all that God ordered concerning it; in that his history is ours, considered as the praying seed of Jacob, intimately linked in one and the same chain. So that we look on with a degree of delight; and anticipate the pleasure which was about to break in upon Jacob's mind, when in the proposed object of this journey, he would once more feast his eyes, in beholding his long-lost son Joseph.

I know not how it is, but so it is, and can only result from sovereign grace, that those that are spiritually taught have similar feelings. There is certainly more in it than mere nature could excite. It riseth to an higher note. So that a regenerated child of God in the present hour, can and doth look back to any, and every period of the church, and join in the songs of the Lord's family as his own. Their God is his God. Their hymn of salvation his also. Hence at each review, we revive the subject afresh; and sing with them in the same harmony of soul, that "the Lord is good, and his mercy endureth for ever."

The first stage of Jacob's journey was Beersheba; about sixteen miles from where he had dwelt at Hebron. Now here the patriarch, and his whole retinue halted. And this Beersheba, was a memorable spot to Jacob. The sight of it could not fail to have awakened many

an image in his mind, from the former events of his life. Here it was that he had passed his younger days with his father Isaac, and before he knew the Lord. (Gen. xxvi. 24.) Here it was from whence he was driven by the anger of his brother Esau, when he had obtained the blessing of his father, and when in the memorable night that followed, he received the first manifestations of the Lord at Bethel. (Gen. xxviii. 10.) And here once more, and as it proved, finally, he was come to behold it, and close his eyes upon it for ever. Here therefore, he offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. Often no doubt he had followed his father in these sacrifices in his younger years; and therefore he closeth his first day's journey in the renewal of the same. How indeed could the patriarch have passed away from a place so sacred without it!

I pause over the history to remark the grace of God, in the renewed manifestations made to Jacob at Beersheba. It is said that "God spake to Israel in the visions of the night." The Lord would not suffer him to pass on to the second day's journey without first letting his servant know that his presence was with him. And let not the reader overlook the very gracious manner in which God revealed himself on this occasion. He called him twice by name: Jacob! Jacob! said the Lord. As if to shew him, how well known he was to the Lord. What can be more blessed than this familiar manner in which the Lord speaks to his people? And I think there is a peculiar blessedness and grace also shewn to the patriarch, in that the Lord called him by his original name Jacob, rather than that of Israel. True indeed, the Lord had honoured him with this name Israel, upon a remarkable occasion, when in a night of great communion with the Lord, the patriarch as a "prince, had power with God and with men, and prevailed." (Gen. xxxii. 24—29.) But it should seem, that the grace of the

Lord in calling him by his first name Jacob, meant to convey to his mind the Lord's more ancient acquaintance with him; and that the Lord not only knew him when at Bethel, but from everlasting. If the reader hath the same apprehensions with me on the subject, he will perceive a very great mercy in all this. For as the Lord, when speaking to his people, dates his regard for them from everlasting, saying: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love;" (Jer. xxxi. 3.) so their names are as familiar to him from everlasting. Their names are in the book of life. (Rev. xiii. 8.) And what the Lord said to Moses is in effect said to every child of God chosen in Christ as Moses was: "I know thee by name, and thou hast found grace in my sight." (Exod. xxxiii. 12.)

One word more on this divine record of Israel's journey. Let the reader, while he remarks the infinite and amazing condescension of Jacob's God in those acts of grace, take with him the scriptural sense to which God's promises extended. God's presence, accompanying the patriarch, became a certain security against all fear; and the assurance that he should be made the father of a great nation, was included in the covenant of grace. (Gen. xxviii. 13, 14.) But we must look beyond the mere letter of the promise of God's bringing him up again, to somewhat higher than a mere natural man would put upon it. Jacob was to return no more, but die in Egypt. The Lord said as much in what followed, namely, that Joseph should put his hand upon the eyes of Jacob; a phrase that implied closing his father eyes at death. And as this was considered among the customs of eastern nations the highest proof of affection; and always if possible, done by the nearest and dearest of relations; Jacob hereby received from God himself the assurance, that his dying moments should be in the presence of his beloved son. And the promise that God would surely

bring up Jacob again to Canaan, his home, was indeed an higher promise than had respect to this life; for it looked forward to that which is to come. In bringing Jacob up again, meant bringing his remains to the cave in Machpelah, to be gathered to his fathers, there to wait the glorious morning of the resurrection. The person and triumphs of the Lord Jesus, over death and the grave, were all comprehended in this assurance from the Lord. "Fear not to go down into Egypt, I will surely bring thee up again. And hence Jacob by faith, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." And by the same faith; "Joseph when he died gave commandment concerning his bones." (Heb. xi. 21, 22.) And it is the same privilege of the Lord's people now, to hear the same precious assurance from the same most precious God and Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, saying to each and to all: "Fear not to go down into the grave; I will go with thee, and I will surely bring thee up again." (John xi. 25. Rom. viii. 11.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And Jacob rose up from Beersheba, and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones and their wives, in the wagons which Pharoah had sent to carry him.

"And they took their cattle and their goods which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him.

"All the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten.

"And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.

"And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

"And Israel said unto Joseph; Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

HERE we close this part of Israel's history. And what a blessed close it forms ! The hoary patriarch having once more been favoured of the Lord to put his eyes on his long-lost son, is now content to close them for ever to all other earthly objects : and to bless God and die. But reader, what is all this, even when heightened by all the interesting events we have in Scripture of Jacob's history, in natural things, compared to those feelings which every redeemed and regenerated child of God hath in his spiritual things ! When once the soul hath seen Christ, in his beauty, (Isaiah xxxiii. 17.) every other object loseth all its charms, and in an higher strain, than this of the patriarch to his son, each may say with Simeon ; "Lord ! now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." (Luke ii. 25—30.)

# MOSES AT THE BUSH.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb."

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush. And he looked, and behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." (Exod. iii. 1, 2.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

We shall enter upon the subject of this great man's history with more advantage for the better apprehension of it, if under divine teaching, we previously attend to what the Holy Ghost hath graciously caused to be recorded, concerning him before the passage here given of holy Scripture. His very name of Moses, which signifies, "drawn out of the water," and which was given to him, not by an Israelite, but by an Egyptian, is not without signification. And although certain it is, that at the eighth day from his birth, according to the rites of the children of Israel, another name must have been given him; yet, throughout the whole Bible, no mention is made of that name; as if the Lord, by this obscurity, would lead his people thereby to the nearer and closer attention to the Lord himself. It is among the precious promises of the Lord to his church, that he will name them himself. "Thou shalt be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name." (Isaiah lxii. 2.) Yea, it must be so, because from all eternity their persons have been chosen, and "their names written in the book of

life." (Rev. xx. 15. Eph. i. 4.) Hence to this very man. Moses, when in the after days of his life, he was in the mount with God, the Lord said unto him: "I know thee by name; and thou hast also found grace in my sight." (Exod. xxxii. 12.) Oh! who shall calculate the immensity of such a blessing! So infinitely important is it in itself, that the Lord Jesus declared it to be a greater blessing than even the subjection of devils to the Lord's people, in the Lord's name. "In this rejoice not, said Jesus, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke x. 20.)

The Holy Ghost, in one verse in his Epistle to the Hebrews, by his servant the apostle, hath given us a most delightful account of the faith which the parents of Moses had in the Lord God of their fathers: "By faith Moses when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw that he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment." (Heb. xi. 23.) Thus wonderfully was introduced to the church the history of this great man; and all that followed in his life shewed the corresponding circumstances. It appears that the king of Egypt, jealous of the growing power of Israel, had, about this time, sent forth a decree, that all the sons of the Hebrews should be destroyed on their birth. But this cruel edict gave but the more occasion for the exercise of the faith of the children of Israel. And in this instance, particularly on the birth of Moses, the means the parents had adopted for the perservation of their child became, in the Lord's hand, the cause, not only of saving their child from the fangs of this inhuman prince, but also of ultimately becoming the overthrow of the tyrant himself, and his whole kingdom.

The relation given in the sacred Scripture of this event is very striking. When the parents of Moses

found that they could no longer conceal their infant, they adopted the singular method for his preservation which nothing but divine wisdom could have directed, and nothing but divine power could have rendered effectual. They made an ark of bulrushes to float on the water, and put their babe in it; committing him to the mercy and favour of the Lord, while exposing him at the edge of the river; and the sister of Moses standing afar off to see what the Lord would direct, and what, under his blessing, the issue might be.

Here, let me observe, was another evidence of the strength of faith in the parents of Moses. For most certain it was, that unless speedily relieved, the child must have perished from a variety of causes. Hunger would shortly have destroyed him; the river would have proved fatal to him; or more than probable, the crocodiles, which infested this Egyptian sea, would have made him their prey; beside many other dangers which surrounded the helpless child. But, descended from him "who against hope believed in hope," they looked to the Lord for help; and as the history records, they looked not in vain. For the Lord, under whose favour they had adopted this plan for salvation; and from whom, though they knew not how, they hoped an happy issue to their endeavours; soon sent to their deliverance, in answer to faith and prayer, one that should do more for them than their most earnest hopes could have conceived. For thus we read: "The daughter of Pharoah came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side. And when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child; and behold the babe wept; and she had compassion on him, and said: This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then said his sister to Pharoah's daughter; shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she

may nurse the child for thee? And Pharoah's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went, and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her: Take this child away, and nurse it for me; and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son." (Exod. ii. 1. 10.)

Who that reads this history, simply as an history, but must be struck with the wonderful relation! But who that reads it with an enlightened eye, but must pause over every minute circumstance recorded, and cry out, as he ponders the amazing concatenation through the whole, and say, "What hath God wrought!" Who but God could have ordered and arranged such a train of events to operate in a coincidence together; that if one link in the chain had broken, the whole must have given way, and failed of the end! What an apparently hopeless scheme the thing itself was! What human probability could have entertained the hope of deliverance from the placing a babe in such a perilous situation! Who but God could have led the daughter of Pharaoh to the spot at the very moment! And even when there, who but the same Almighty power could have prompted the daughter to act in opposition to the will of her father! Who caused the babe to weep? And who made the heart of Pharaoh's daughter to be touched with pity at the cries of the babe? And who, but the same Almighty God, kept the sister in waiting, to see what the event would be; and led to the astonishing sequel of this wonderful history, to call the very mother of Moses to take her own child again to her bosom, and with a promise of wages for taking care of him; who was tremblingly alive at what would become of him, and but an hour before, would have

sacrificed her own life, for the preservation of the life of her child !

What a world of mysteries we are in ! How unerring are all the councils of God ! How eternally safe are the Lord's people, amidst all the host of foes which are against them ! It is blessedly said, in relation to the church of old ; " the Lord led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." (Psalm cvii. 7.) Every part of their history shews that it was not unfrequently a rough way, and not a velvet path ; nevertheless, it was the right way ; and the very way to glory. I know not what the reader's path may be ; but this I know, until we are brought to study the divine sovereignty, and see the wisdom and love of God in all God's appointments, we shall never come to the same right conclusion.

But when we have formed suitable improvements from the Lord's providence, as manifested in this instance of Moses ; let us not turn away, until that we have gathered a spiritual improvement from it, as it speaks to ourselves in a way of grace. The Lord, by his servant the prophet Ezekiel, describes our whole nature as in the Adam fall transgression, under a more alarming state than that of an infant just born, and cast out to perish. " No eye pitied thee (saith the Lord) to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee ; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood ; I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live ; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live." (Ezek. xvi. 1—14.)

Let the reader ponder over, and mark well the sovereign ways of God's grace. Here was no ark of bulrushes for our preservation ; no friend like Moses's sister to look on ; no Pharaoh's daughter to be moved

with compassion for us, to take us in; and none but God himself to behold us, as the babe that wept. But when loathsome in our person, and cast out to perish; then our time of helpless misery was a time of love. One like to the Son of man, even the Son of God himself, came to us as the divine Samaritan, in our low estate; bound up our wounds, and poured in the oil and wine of his most precious blood; brought us to the inn of his church, and took care of us; and will bring us home, and bring us in to his everlasting kingdom. Well may we cry out with the prophet; "Sing O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it! Shout ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing ye mountains; O forest and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel." (Isaiah xliv. 23.)

We must now make a large stride over the history of Moses, and comprise within a short compass, the *first forty years* of his eventful life, in only observing, that during this his residence in the court of Pharaoh, we know little more of him, than what is related by Stephen, in his address before the Jewish council, where he saith, "that Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in words and deeds." (Acts vii. 22.) Strange to our apprehensions that one whom God designed for the deliverance of his people from bondage, should have been put to school in such a place. Here however it was, that he first acquired the rudiments of that learning, which afterwards qualified him for the vast undertaking. In this university, he might be said to have taken his degrees, both of Bachelor, and Master of Arts; and however unconscious all the while of the grace of God who had destined him to be a prophet of the Lord, he was appointed to dwell in the court of an heathen, and spend the third part of his life among the enemies of the God of Israel.

Let the reader pause over the view, for it leads to many a gracious lesson. If all the Lord's people do not live so large a portion of their unregenerate state, as Moses did, with the ungodly; yet depend upon it, in the other parts of this history, the case of Moses is not singular. Every child of God, given to Christ, before the foundation of the world, is in God's views, what he is to be to all eternity. His birth in nature, both as to time and place, and his connections, are so ordered, as shall best correspond to the original purpose of God, and become subservient to the one great end of his future and eternal state by grace. For as this time being, is not the first destination; so is it not the final. All here is but intermediate and preparatory. The church of Christ in every individual member of Christ's mystical body, is placed here with reference to God's original decree, and the condition hereafter; so that we have not a being and station given to us out of which we are chosen to salvation; but we are first chosen to salvation, and then placed here, as shall best promote the ends of that salvation. To this unerring conclusion, are these words of the Holy Ghost by Paul to the church. "We are bound (said he) to give thanks always to God, for you brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. ii. 13, 14.)

And I take occasion herefrom, most affectionately to beg every redeemed and regenerated child of God into whose hands these Scripture Extracts may fall, not to lose sight of this important doctrine. We see in life the Lord's people variously placed. Some and the greater part it may be in poor circumstances; others though perhaps but few, rich: we find some

with higher intellect; others with less. But the poverty of the one, or the apparently better station of the other; the greater understanding of this man, or the weaker of that; these have no tendency to any unfavourable operation, but rather minister to the good of all. Every thing is so arranged by a wisdom that cannot err, and conducted by a power that cannot fail; that a synod of angels, if met daily to order for the Lord's whole family of anointed ones, could not add to, or take from, the present divine order, to render in a single instance any thing of profit. "All things work together for good, to them that love God; to them that are the called according to his purpose." (Rom. viii. 28.)

From the first forty years in Moses's life, if we prosecute his history to what followed, we must now see him in his flight from Egypt, until we find him in Midian. The holy Ghost hath related this in his own divine record. It is said, that "when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel." The question is: how knew he that the children of Israel were his brethren? It may be said that he knew it by the mark of circumcision in himself, that he was of the seed of Abraham. And though perhaps this might be unknown to the court of Pharaoh; yea, it is more than probable, that Moses himself, unawakened by grace, would gladly have suppressed the relationship; yet, over-ruled by sovereign power, he felt an interest in the concerns of the poor oppressed Hebrews; and could not resist the impulse in his own mind, to take part with them against their oppressors. When therefore, as his history relates, he had stood up for them, against an Egyptian; and this act laid him open to the wrath of the King of Egypt; he hastily departed from Egypt, and took a farewell of her that had adopted him, and the whole court of

Pharaoh together. The Holy Ghost hath given the account. "By faith Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of reward. By faith, he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible." (Heb. xi. 24—27.)

Oh! what a subject is opened here, did the limits of this little work admit the prosecution of it, for the sweetest spiritual improvement! What a disposition sometimes appears in the mind of the Lord's people, to the Lord's cause, even before the persons themselves have any consciousness whose they are, and to whom they belong!

We must now take another leap in the history of Moses, and pass over a second forty years of the life which he spent in retirement, when in a married state, with one of the daughters of the priest of Midian, he kept his father-in-law's flock, far removed from the court of Pharaoh, and equally remote from the children of Israel.

Here then we see one of the greatest of men, and concerning whom the sacred history saith: "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face;" living the "two first forty years" of his life; first in a court; and then in retirement; and now at length brought by the providence of God, to the mountain of Horeb, as the Scripture here represents him. Here, the visions of God began. Here, Moses in his *eightieth year* is brought into his first acquaintance with God. Here, opens to Moses, that manifestation of Jehovah in his Trinity of persons, in the spiritual apprehension

of which all the subsequent events of his life, had their beginning.

I cannot enter upon the subject until that I have first detained the reader to remark with me, the wonderful ways and works of God! What a mysterious subject that of regeneration is! With some, how early it begins; with others, how late! The prophet Samuel was called from a child. (1 Sam. iii. 1—8.) The prophet Moses, not until he had attained his eightieth year. It is said of Timothy, that from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures. (2 Tim. iii. 15.) The dying thief on the cross had Christ revealed unto him only in the last hour. (Luke xxiii. 43.) What a striking Scripture is that in relation to the gospel church: "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old: but the sinner being an hundred years old, shall be accursed!" (Isa. lxv. 20.) Hence we find some gathered to Christ in their youth; others, in old age. Some sent into the vineyard at an early hour; others, at the eleventh hour. (Matt. xx. 1—6.) The cripple at the gate of the temple was forty years old when healed. (Acts iv. 22.) The man at the pool of Bethesda, had lain thirty and eighty years in his misery. (John v. 5.) The poor woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Jesus healed in the synagogue, Satan had bound eighteen years. (Luke xiii. 16.) And Æneas, eight years. (Acts ix. 33.) Oh! the wonders of our wonder-working God! Well may every child of God in contemplating his own spiritual awakening, and the spiritual awakening of others, exclaim in the song of Moses the servant of God, and of the Lamb, and say; "Great and marvellous are thy works Lord God Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." (Rev. xv. 3.)

Arrived at the eightieth year of Moses's life, we

now accompany him in Horeb. This mount of God became memorable on another occasion, in the after-stages in the life of Moses; for, from hence, the law was delivered to Israel; and here also was made the covenant with Israel. The mind of Moses was arrested at a sight so wonderful, as that of a bush burning with fire, and yet not consumed. And no doubt the man of God at first view, considered that there was somewhat in it supernatural. Whether at that time, the Lord gave a full spiritual apprehension of the very blessed things contained in it; I stay not to enquire. But to the redeemed and regenerated child of God, explained to us as it now is, by the glorious gospel of the ever-blessed God; through grace, we are taught to behold in it many divine truths plainly revealed.

The Scripture saith, that it was an angel of the Lord that appeared unto Moses in a flame of fire in a bush. But that this was the identical person of the Angel or Messenger of the covenant, so called in other Scriptures, and not a created angel, even the uncreated Word, that afterwards was "made flesh and dwelt among us," is evident from what followed in this same chapter, where the same Almighty Speaker, who first called to Moses from the bush, called himself also "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." (See verse 4, 6.) It is very blessed to observe through every part of the Bible, what a beautiful correspondence there is in relation to the grand and essential articles of our most holy faith.

A bush burning with fire, and not consumed, became a striking emblem of our poor fallen nature, justly exposed by reason of sin to all the fiery indignation of divine wrath, but still preserved, because the Son of God dwells in that nature to prevent destruction. And the emblem is heightened to the

fullest representation in that it was a bush, and not a tree, like the cedar of Lebanon, in which the Lord appeared in a flame of fire. Precious Lord! what infinite condescension is that when tabernacling in substance of our flesh for the purpose of salvation, thou camest not in pomp and grandeur, but "in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." (Rom. viii. 3.)

But besides this intention manifested by a bush on fire, and not consumed, in which the Lord was pleased to begin the first manifestation of himself to Moses; there seems to have been another very endearing love-token of the Lord intended by it. Israel was now groaning under the rigorous burden of Egypt from their task-masters. A bush therefore surrounded with flames, and yet not reduced to ashes, became no unapt resemblance of Israel, in the furnace of affliction, and still surviving the hottest blowing of their enemies. So the Lord himself expressed it in an after day of the church, when bidding the people look back to their time of Jacob's trouble. "The Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people, as it is this day." (Deut. iv. 2.)

And let not the reader limit these precious words of our most gracious God to his Israel of old; for they are equally applicable, and equally designed for the comfort of the Lord's Israel now. The church of the Most High God, in all ages, is as a bush burning with fire; when from our corruptions within, and temptations without, and the persecutions of the ungodly all around, the fire of afflictions besets the Lord's people, and threatens instant destruction. And how is it that they are not consumed, but from being sustained by a power greater than their own? "The Lord is in the midst of Zion; she shall not be moved."

But we must not stop here. The Son of God in our nature is not only the sole cause, wherefore as a dry combustible bush ready for burning, our sinful nature is not at once consumed by the fiery indignation of our justly offended God; but the sole cause also wherefore that nature shall never be consumed by the second death, but is delivered from the wrath to come. When the Son of God in our nature is beheld sustaining as our Surety the whole wrath of God due to sin; and in his own Almighty person, God and man in one, bearing our sins and our punishment; and the torments of divine displeasure against sin, falling on him, and he meeting those flames of fire, which would utterly consume the whole of mankind; yet, like the bush unburnt, the church of God is eternally saved in him: here the most precious sight of what Moses in the representation saw at Horeb, opens in all its glory; and in the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, when spiritually seen and spiritually received into the soul, and lived upon by faith, day by day; we then behold, indeed, that wonderful sight, the Son of God, as the angel of the covenant appearing "in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush, and the bush not consumed."

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## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.

"And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses! Moses! And he said, here am I.

"And He said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

"Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father: the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look on God." (Exodus iii. 3—6.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

Whatever were the first feelings in the mind of Moses when attracted by a sight so wonderful as that of a bush burning with fire, and not consumed: and when he turned aside to see it; yet certain it is, that the impressions then wrought were never after effaced to the end of his life. For we find him, when taking a final farewell of the church at the close of his ministry, and blessing the several tribes of Israel, with his parting breath, making particular reference to this scene, and in blessing Joseph, he expressed himself in these words: "For the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush; let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren." (Deut. xxxiii. 16. Gen. xlix. 26.) There can be no question, but that the Lord, who called the attention of Moses to a sight so wonderful, accompanied it with all suitable manifestations of himself. These were first discoveries of the love of God in Christ; but they were powerful discoveries. The good will of Him that dwelt in the bush; or as it might be rendered, *my dweller* in the bush; too plainly testify the sense Moses had, of the Son of God in his dwelling in our nature, including all those glorious purposes connected with our salvation.

And if I make a momentary pause here, it shall be to observe, that the case of Moses is not singular. Many of the Lord's people can better recollect the day of their espousals, than they can call to mind thousands of love tokens the Lord hath shewn them in the after stages of life. And it is not to be wondered at; for the Lord himself speaks of these first seasons of communion, with special marks of his favour. "Go (saith the Lord) and cry in the ears of

Jerusalem; saying, Thus saith the Lord: I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase." (Jer. ii. 1—3.)

Let the reader observe the infinite grace of our God in what follows. "And when the Lord saw that Moses turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush; and said, Moses! Moses!" Here are so many precious things contained within the bosom of this Scripture, that I can only glance at them, without much enlarging.

*First:*—Let it not be overlooked, that both the representation here made of a bush burning with fire, and not consumed: and the first overtures for communion of the Lord with Moses; both began on the part of God. Oh! how sure is it, and how blessed in the assurance, that we are altogether passive in the work of grace. "If we love him, (saith John) it is because he first loved us." (John iv. 19.) The everlasting love of God in his trinity of persons, to the church, and to every individual of the church, as the persons of each are beheld, and chosen, and adopted, and accepted in Christ; all, as it begins in God, so is it first manifested from God; and the Lord's communion with his people is the great source of all blessedness as the cause; as the people's communion with God in Christ is the effect. Hence we find the Lord here beginning with Moses. "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush."

*Secondly:*—Let not the reader pass away from this farther view of the infinite condescension of our God; in that, God called unto him, not from heaven, but from the midst of a burning bush. As if to intimate that all the revelations made to the church, are made to us from God in our nature. "Emmanuel God

with us!" It would overwhelm our souls even in our ripened faculties, were God in the essence of his being and nature, to speak to us. How very gracious then is it that all the revelations of Jehovah in his Trinity of persons, are made to us in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ! so that as God, one with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, all divine perfections are His, and in Him, and all mercies flow from him: yet coming to us in and through a nature like our own, they are assimilated to our nature, and so graciously softened to our apprehensions, as to be perfectly endeared to our enjoyment: Christ's human nature being blended with his divine.

*Thirdly*:—It is not the least among the condescending acts of grace in our God in this manifestation to the man of God in the mount, the very familiar and endearing manner in which the Lord called to him by name: Moses! Moses! As if the Lord thereby would assure him, that though Moses knew not the Lord, yet the Lord well knew him. And this is one of the most distinguishing features of the gospel. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." (2 Tim. ii. 19.) Jesus saith, that "he calleth his own sheep by name." (John x. 3.) So that it is the very persons of his people that are chosen by him, and known by him. It is not yours but you; not what Moses had done, or could do; but what the Lord had done for him in choosing him, and calling him. As the Lord said to him afterwards, "I know thee by name, and thou hast found grace in my sight." (Exod. xxxiii. 12.) Let it only be added to this view of Moses, as it relates personally to him, to take those words of Scripture, as the same relates to all his people: "Such honour have all his saints." (Psalm cxlix. 9.)

*Fourthly*:—There is much of grace also in the precept the Lord gave to Moses, not to draw nigh. There are no approaches to be made to God, but in Christ. In him we have boldness to come nigh to

God; but without him, there is no coming to the Father. And here is a beautiful and gracious design in these words. To draw nigh to God in Christ, in the new and living way which is consecrated for us, through the vail of his flesh, this is our privilege. But even here to put off the shoe, to intimate reverence and godly fear; and while drawing nigh in Christ, not to pry into mysteries of God without Christ, as if commensurate to our apprehension. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and our children for ever." (Deut. xxix. 29.)

*Fifthly:*—It was very blessed and gracious at this divine manifestation, that while Moses had this represented to him of the Son of God in our nature, by which our nature, like the burning bush, is preserved from being consumed; what God said at the same time to him, no less assured him of the salvation of the church in God's covenant for him. For in declaring himself the "God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," here was the glory of God's grace, and the glory of Christ's person together: and both becoming the everlasting security of the church. For Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had been dead for many years, but God was as much their God in death as in life; as in after ages, the Lord Jesus told the Sadducees. (Luke xx. 37.)

Let me only add a short observation on what is said of Moses, that when our God thus spake, Moses hid his face, "for he was afraid to look on God." Yes! never doth the soul lay lower before God, than when God is coming forth in mercy to raise the soul. Then we see and feel most sensibly our own nothingness, when the Lord makes our souls most sensible of his goodness, amidst all our own undeservings.

Methinks I would not have the reader, (if he be a spiritual reader,) pass away from the views of this or-

dinance, (if I may so call it) which the Lord opened at Mount Horeb, for having communion with Moses, until that he hath first considered that such is the nature of all ordinances in every age of the church. Every thing, under the Old Testament dispensation, became a shadow, or type, of gospel ordinances under the new. And what acted as mediums, to bring the Lord's people into spiritual apprehensions of the Lord's favour then, may be found instrumental to the same, or rather more enlarged spiritual enjoyments now. When therefore, we trace the Lord's footsteps in those early ages of the church, and see how our glorious Lord seemed to anticipate the time of his openly tabernacling with his people in substance of our flesh; by various manifestations, sometimes in one form, and sometimes in another, as if he meant to say, howgreatly his longings and desires were towards his people before his incarnation; surely, now redemption work is finished, we may safely conclude that He is not less desirous of such manifestations. That blessed promise of His is always to be kept in view, and by lively actings of faith, lived upon and enjoyed. "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John xiv. 23.) And how blessedly, in confirmation of the same, hath he closed up that divine sermon: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John xvi. 33.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry, by reason of their task-masters: for I know their sorrows.

"And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land, unto a good land, and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

"Now, therefore, behold the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

"Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt." (Exod. iii. 7—10.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

We have here the ordination of Moses to the Lord's service. The former views we have taken of him, referred to his own private and personal call, by sovereign grace. This latter begins the Lord's call of him to his public ministry. Both, indeed, furnish almost endless subject for improvement; but the limits I must observe, will not admit of enlarging on either. The wonderful history of this great man, may be well supposed to be replete with instruction. He lived to the age of one hundred and twenty years. And his life appears to have been divided into three times forty. The first forty years he spent in the court of Pharaoh. The second, in retirement with his father-in-law, Jethro, in keeping sheep. And the third, acting as the Lord's ambassador, in emancipating Israel from Egyptian bondage, and conducting the people through the wilderness to the borders of Canaan.

This latter part in the life of Moses, and by far, no doubt, the most interesting, forms a separate and distinct subject of itself; and is too extensive to come within the limits of a work of this kind. I am therefore constrained once more to leap over the history, and hasten to that part of it, which closeth the life of Moses. The last words of the Lord's people, and especially the Lord's people employed in his service, are eminently striking. And if we take into one view the representation given of Moses in the mount of

Horeb at the bush, when the visions of God began; and the account given of him on mount Nebo, when he breathed out his soul on the mouth of the Lord; we shall find great subject for much spiritual improvement.

But before the history of Moses be thus finally wound up, it will be still more to our purpose, to lose sight of the servant, and contemplate the Master; and in the view of the Lord's call to Moses, for the bringing out the Lord's people from Egypt, to behold the Lord himself strikingly represented as bringing forth his church from worse then Egyptian bondage, even from sin and sorrow; death and hell; and bringing the whole ransomed church of Christ through all the wilderness state of this world, to the possession of that glorious kingdom above, of which Canaan, with all its sweets, in flowing with mild and honey was but a type. Here indeed, is the cause for which Moses and his services are alone interesting. It is of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God in our nature, to whom Jehovah speaks, when, as in this Scripture, the Lord saith, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people; I am come down to deliver them out of all; Come now therefore, I will send thee into Egypt."

And let the reader observe in this Scripture, with what tenderness the Lord speaks of his people, and the interest that he takes in all that concerns them. "I have seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt. I have heard their cry. I know their sorrows." Stephen, in after ages, in his relation of this scene of the Lord in the mount, repeats those words of the Lord: "I have seen, I have seen." (Acts vii. 34.) By which I presume, this faithful servant of the Lord intended thereby to intimate the certainty of the Lord's taking notice of all the concerns of his people; and that the Lord would have them to know of his being thus interested for them. And indeed

it is among the sweetest parts of our most holy faith, to know and bring forth into daily exercise, the certainty that the Lord hath a personal apprehension of all that relates, both to our persons, and to our concerns. He knows all. And he not only knows as God; but he feels as man. And in the union of both, as God and man, in one person, our most glorious Christ is specially qualified for this mighty work of Redemption. Very blessedly is it said by the Holy Ghost, that "in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." (Heb. ii. 17, 18.) So that the son of God, by taking our nature into union with his GODHEAD, is not only rendered a suited Saviour to deliver us from all our sins; but also a tender Saviour, in having fellow-feeling for us to enter into all our sorrows. Our faith is mightily strengthened hereby, to take confidence in him: for we now can, and do, come to him, with a freedom, which but for this double nature, we never could have done. For what an endearment there is in the very assurance, that He not only knoweth our frame, and remembereth we are but dust, as God: but he feeleth for that frame as man; so that we now "may come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 15, 16.)

But we must not stop here. In such views of our glorious Lord, it is not enough to know him under such endearments of character, but also to have always in view that Christ's love is like himself; full, free, large, and of such infinite dimensions, that hath neither bottom, nor shore. And it is very blessed to observe, how the Lord delights to make it known. He comes

home to our tenderest affections on this ground. He saith himself, that he so intimately enters into all our concerns as though (and which in fact is the case) they were his own. I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord : thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jer. xxix. 11.) And again by the same prophet, the Lord speaks, saying : " Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good : and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul." (Jer. xxxii. 41.) By this land, it should be understood, not simply the land of Canaan, for this was but a type of that "better country which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." But the sense is, the Lord will bring them home to himself, he being their home, their portion. And when the Lord expressed himself, in this most gracious way of "his whole heart, and his whole soul ; it is not figuratively spoken, but substantially and really so. For the Son of God, taking into union with him our nature, hath the same nature as we have ; and knows what human passions are, and what that nature is by his own ; and is truly merciful, and hath bowels of compassion, and love, to his people as man ; and all his affections are called forth towards them, "with his whole heart, and with his whole soul."

And let me farther observe on this subject, that the afflictions of the Lord's people are not only seen by the Lord, but measured out by the Lord, and appointed by the Lord ; yea, the Lord takes part in them, and considers them as his own, from their union with himself. This is a point beyond the former. Hence the prophet, in after ages, speaking on this subject, was instructed, by the Holy Ghost, to tell the church as much : "In all their afflictions, he was afflicted." (Isaiah lxiii. 9.) That certain somewhat, even himself in them ; and they in him ; by this union and oneness ; made their

sufferings his; and what was done to them, was in effect done to himself. Hence, by another prophet, it was said to the church: "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." (Zech. ii. 8.) And in this very Scripture, concerning Israel in Egypt, the Lord speaks, as in the person of his people: "When I heard a language that I understood not." (Psalm lxxxi. 5.) That it is the Lord that here speaks, is evident from what follows in the next verses: "I removed his shoulder from the burden. Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee;" (verses 6 and 7.) That it is the Lord thus speaking, is then evident; and speaking in the person of his people is also as evident; for, in no other sense could it be said, that there is any language which God understands not. And we have another beautiful illustration of the same in this history, in which the Lord considers himself, and his people one, and speaks in their name. The part to which I allude is, where the Lord by Moses, threatens Pharaoh with one plague more, and then saith: "And after that, I will go out." (Exod. xi. 8.) Observe, it is not said, My people shall go out; but I will go out. What a most sweet and endearing consideration is this, of the oneness and union between Christ and his people; and what a train of the most blessed consequences result from it!

And let not the reader, for a moment, be tempted to suppose, that I carry this matter too far; for, in truth, the subject is never considered by the Lord's people in an equal degree, to what they are warranted to carry it; and the defect is more on the other side, for few of the Lord's people make as much of this oneness with Christ, as they ought. He is of all relations, the nearest, the greatest, the most ancient, and the best. And when we do not make more of him, than of all beside, we rob our-

selves of our rights and privileges, and the Lord of his glory.

One word more, before we dismiss this interesting view of the subject. Who, untaught of God himself, would have thought, that when, as in this Scripture, we hear the Lord speaking to Moses from the bush, concerning his Israel, and of his entering with such tenderness into all their concerns, that his Almighty hand was first in the oppressions, wherewith the Egyptians made Israel so grievously to groan. But so it was. Neither can we ever sufficiently bless God the Holy Ghost, while recording the relation, that he hath with it, given us this assurance. In one of the Psalms, where the Lord is reciting this history for the instruction of the church, it is said; "the Lord turned their hearts to hate his people." (Psalm cv. 25.) So that we here learn, that while the Lord so tenderly watched over his people for their good, and both noticed their sorrows, and felt for them, and took part in all of them; he himself it was, that inclined the heart of the Egyptians to oppress his people. All was in the gracious wisdom and appointment of the Lord, that thereby he might ultimately deliver his own chosen people, and destroy their enemies.

The children of Israel, notwithstanding their rigorous bondage, were too fond of Egypt. They were willing, as the sinners in Zion in all ages are, until awakened by sovereign grace, to settle on the lees of their own fallen nature. The Lord therefore, turned the hearts of their enemies into hatred towards them. And this process, under the Lord's grace, operated to unsettle their nests, and render their beds thorny. And hence, by terrible things in righteousness, the Lord accomplished his merciful purposes towards them, to "bring them out of bondage, and the shadow of death; and to burst their bonds

asunder." Well may every one that reads it cry out with the Psalmist, and say: "Oh! that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psalm cvii. 8, &c.)

But with this view of the history of Israel of old, let us not overlook the interest the Israel of God hath in it now. The present hour affords the same cause for watching the Lord's providence and grace towards his people, as it did then. I often find it good in seasons of trial, to trace all events that are going on in life to the first cause. And when, under divine teaching, I am led to the discovery that this man's reproach, or that man's scorn, with all other the numberless evils which spring from the corrupt stock of the Adam-nature, as well in myself as others, come from the Lord's appointment; I find a certain peace, of mind, which bears me up during the time of trial, because, from the Lord's blessing upon it, I know that the issue will be good. When Shimei came forth to curse king David; and at a time that his cup of affliction was brim-full, from the unnatural attempt of his son Absalom on his life; and when Abishai would have put Shimei to death for it, the man of God saw the hand of God in the aggravated affliction; and he said unto Abishai, "Let him alone, let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? And David said to Abishai; Behold! my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be, that the Lord will look on mine affliction; and the Lord will requite me good for evil this day." (2 Sam. xvi. 5—12.) What a delightful frame of mind for every redeemed and regenerated child of God to be found in under exercises! And when thus they

are favoured of the Lord, they discover, through his divine teaching, that the Lord, as in the case of Israel, both sees their afflictions, knows their sorrows, and sympathiseth with them in all; and is engaged to bring them out of all. And then they can and do enter into a spiritual apprehension of that sweet Scripture, which God the Holy Ghost hath given the church by his servant the apostle; "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward, (when the Lord hath sanctified it by his grace) it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. xii. 11.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And Moses went up from the plains of Moab, unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord shewed him all the land.

"So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley, in the land of Moab.

"And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

"And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab, thirty days." (Deut. xxxiv. 1—8.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

Here the Holy Ghost brings us to the close of Moses's history; the common close of all mankind. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Some, however, have thought, that Moses was translated to heaven, as Elijah in after ages was. But this idea is contrary to Scripture. For this same chapter, which speaks of Moses's death, speaks also of his burial. He was indeed buried in a way and

manner as none before or since was; even by the Lord himself. But "though dead, he speaketh." What a world of usefulness to the church of Christ, hath proved under the divine blessing, the labours of this man, from that hour to the present; and will continue in the same manner through grace, during the whole time state of the church upon earth!

Let me beg the reader to observe, with what alacrity Moses ascended the top of Pisgah for death, assured from the Lord that he should descend no more. I never can say enough to the redeemed and regenerated child of God; yea, and to my own heart also, of the blessedness of faith which induceth such effects. Old Testament saints were eminent examples for this confidence in the Lord. They had known the blessedness of it in life. They had no apprehensions that it would be otherwise with them in death. They died therefore as they had lived, "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." Oh! what a lesson to New Testament believers!

Moses, also, connected first views of God with his last views. That gracious God which appeared to him at Horeb, he never lost sight of through life; and in death, the remembrance came with double lustre to his mind. The manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ at the bush, arose to his recollection in all its glories. God had there proclaimed himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: and God was as much the God of his fathers in covenant assurances when dying, as when living: Moses felt the full force of it, and spake of it just before he ascended Pisgah's top, to breathe his last. And I trust that sad as the present awful times are; and faith at the lowest ebb; not a few of the Lord's people still remain who have Moses's spirit, and can and do say with him, "My dweller in the bush!" It is very blessed when going out of time into eternity, that the

triumphs of the faithful are the same. Many a child of God hath, in spiritual apprehension, entered the world above before the lips of the trembling body have ceased to move below; and though under the oppression of the cold clammy sweat of death on earth, hath seen himself "raised up together, and sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus!"

One word more in taking a farewell of Moses the man of God. The strength and vigour of his mind, without dimness of sight, or natural force abated in death, serves to shew the Lord's people an illustration of that sweet promise which was manifested to Moses, and alike belongs to all the people of God. "Even to your old age, I am he; and even to hoary hairs will I carry you. I have made, and I will bear: even I will carry and will deliver you." (Isaiah xlvi. 4.) And thus Moses and the patriarchs; Old Testament saints, and New Testament believers; all alike are supported by Him, whose language is, "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel thy Saviour." (Isaiah xliii. 1—3.)

But when we have paid all due respect to Moses, and followed his history from the river, where soon after his birth he was left to perish; to the view of him on the top of Pisgah, where at his death, we find him breathing out his soul to God, let us drop the servant and look at the Master; and lose sight of Moses in the contemplation of the Son of God.

Most graciously and blessedly, doth God the Holy Ghost, by Paul, call the spiritual church to this unceasing attention to her Lord. And having drawn

him forth, both in his divine nature, and in his human nature, and in this mysterious union as the Lord Jesus Christ, the Christ of God, invites the church thus to behold him: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus: who was faithful to Him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house, hath more honour than the house; for every house is builded by some man, but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after. But Christ as a Son over his own house, whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope, firm to the end." (Heb. iii. 1, 6.)

Let the redeemed and regenerated child of God duly attend to the distinct features of character here drawn by God the Holy Ghost himself, between the servant and the Master; between the man Moses, and He who is God and man in one person, the Lord Jesus Christ, and then say, what plainer terms to define the creature from the infinite Creator, and to mark between the sinner saved by grace, from the Saviour of that sinner, can there be than are here given? Surely the figure or the substance, call it which you will, to distinguish him that builds an house, from the mere house itself, most strikingly decides the point. If he who hath built all things is God, and all things were made by Christ, and for Christ, and without him was not any thing made that was made; (Col. i. 16. John i. 3.) Christ then is, and must be God. And what a glorious object of our unceasing adoration, love and praise, would this Almighty Lord, which the Holy Ghost holds out to our contemplation, be, had we always our spiritual faculties, and the organs of spi-

ritual vision so enlightened, as to form suitable apprehensions of his infinite dignity and greatness! And what an everlasting subject in this contemplation, is opened to the church of the living God, in the glories of his person, his greatness, graciousness, fitness, fulness, and glory; "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily; and the church of God complete in him." (Col. ii. 9.)

In the glories of his person, we contemplate in substance what Moses at the top of Pisgah only beheld by faith. His were distant views; and like those of Abraham "seen only afar off." Ours, in Christ, bring all things nigh. He indeed, like all the patriarchs, was "persuaded of them, and embraced them:" but ours is in possession; "Christ being formed in our hearts the hope of glory." His was but the "expectatoin of good things to come." We have received "a kingdom that cannot be moved, whereby we have grace to serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." Moses died in faith, and had all the sweetness of that faith which looked to the coming Saviour; we have seen him come, finish redemption work, and that he hath returned to glory. The faithful in that age rejoiced in the hope that afterwards would follow: believers bring their enjoyments into possession now. Death had not been paid its penalty before Christ died; but by his death he hath destroyed him that had the power of death, and delivered them who through fear of death, (though children) were subject to bondage. (Heb. ii. 14.) Oh! precious Lord Jesus! thy redeemed behold thee, not on Pisgah's mount, but above all mounts; and hear thy voice as John heard it, when laying thy right hand upon him as thou dost on thy people; saying: "Fear not! I am the first, and I am the last: I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death."

# THE CALL OF SAMUEL.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision." (1 Sam. iii. 1.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

Samuel was a child of many prayers. And his mother called his name Samuel on this very account; for she said, "Because I have asked him of the Lord." (Chap. i. 20.) Holy men of old were remarkable for calling their children by certain names, which might perpetuate and keep alive in their minds the Lord's gracious manifestation of himself to them in special mercies. Yea, the Lord gave his divine sanction to this method of his people; for, upon several occasions, we find the Lord assuming to himself a name, which might impress the minds of his people with the recollection of some more than ordinary mercy. We have a very striking instance of the kind, as related by the prophet, which serves to shew the good pleasure of the Lord, in points of this nature. Looking into gospel times, the Lord taught his people, that such should be the auspicious events which would then take place, that the deliverance which the Lord had wrought for them, in rescuing them from Egyptian bondage, would be as nothing, in comparison with their greater deliverance from sin, death, hell, and the grave, by the mighty salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Behold the days come saith the Lord, that they shall no more

say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but The Lord liveth, which brought up, and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them, and they shall dwell in their own land." (Jer. xxiii. 7, 8.)

And we have a yet more striking proof of the Lord's approbation in his thus assuming some new name upon the manifestation of some new mercy; and being pleased that his people should know him under this endeared and endearing character. For, speaking of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ in his triumphs over death and the grave, God is called, The God of peace. "Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, for ever and ever." Amen. (Heb. xiii. 20.)

I cannot help remarking upon this subject, how much degenerated, to such memorials of perpetuating divine mercies, is the present era of the church! Modern times seem to have lost sight of such records. And even among the Lord's own people; and of whom we have reason to hope good; few are there that preserve memorandums in the names of their children, or of remarkable places in God's providence over them in the eventful circumstances of their lives. We find whole Psalms written, and marked with this title, "To bring to remembrance." (Psalm xxxviii. 70.) And Hannah's Samuel, as often as his history is read, cannot fail to bring to remembrance, that the godly mother so named him, that while she loved her child, and considered him as the Lord's gift, she loved yet more the Lord himself as the Giver. "And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli"

It forms a very beautiful introduction of the life of Samuel, that he was so early brought into the outer courts of the Lord's house. As his mother had considered her child as a gift from the Lord; she had formed a resolution, through grace, that she would give back the precious loan again to the Lord for ever. Godly parents may here learn a most interesting lesson. All we have, and all we are, can only come from the Lord: and consequently they are still the Lord's. So that when the Lord gave Hannah this son, the Lord did not forego his right in Samuel. He was still his. It would be well in the Lord's people, so to estimate the Lord's gifts, rather as loans than gifts; lent but for a season, and which in reality they are; and not as our fee-simples, to hold for ever; which they are not. And by thus sitting loose to creatures, as having only a secondary right in them; and even that, only during the Lord's pleasure; when they are re-called, the vacancy will not be so great: neither the heart so violently torn in the separation. I would recommend the reader to ponder the subject in this light; and if the Lord gives grace to a scriptural understanding of it, the meditation will be profitable. One sweet thought ariseth out of it, which I wish to mention before we close this review of the subject; namely, that there is a gift which God our Father hath given to his church and people, which in every sense of the word is a gift, and so fully given, as never can be recalled: I mean, his dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is a gift, which not only infinitely exceeds all other gifts, but is essential to make every other gift truly blessed. And this the church hath, to have and to hold for ever. Well may every redeemed and regenerated child of God who knows this, cry out with the apostle and say: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" (2 Cor. ix. 15.)

We have another interesting instruction, from the

view this Scripture gives of the child Samuel ministering unto the Lord before Eli; namely, the importance of children attending ordinances in the Lord's house of prayer, before they can be supposed capable of drawing any spiritual improvement from ordinances. We find the Lord himself, on those occasions, commanding the little ones of Israel, as well as their fathers, to come before the Lord. (Deut. xxix. 10, 13. Joshua viii. 35.) Nay, the very babes that sucked the breasts were to be brought also. (Joel ii. 16.) Hence we learn the pleasure of the Lord on this interesting point. And who shall say, in respect to the election of grace, how many are there, like Samuel, when godly parents present their little ones with themselves, before the Lord, have found grace in the eyes of the Lord, unto whom the Lord is waiting to be gracious; and in the fulness of time to quicken into a new and spiritual life in Christ! It is said of the good king Josiah, that he was but "eight years old when he began to reign, and in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father." (2 Chron. xxxiv. 1—3.) And it is said as the highest commendation of Timothy; that "from a child, he had known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. iii. 15.) And what can be a more lovely sight than to see the father or mother of a family, taking with them their little ones to the house of prayer, and bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!" (Eph. vi. 4.)

"And the word of the Lord was precious in those days: there was no open vision." It was an awful day, when the Lord, the Holy Ghost, suspended the operations in the ministry of his word! The sons of Eli, we are told, made themselves vile, and brought their ministry into contempt; "for men abhorred

thereby the offering of the Lord." (Chap. ii. 12—17.) It is an equally awful day now, if from the unfaithfulness of those that minister in holy things, the Lord's presence is not known, nor felt, in the assembly of the people. The glory of the assembly of the faithful is Jehovah Shammah, "the Lord is there." But if the Lord be not there, in the manifestations of his presence to bless his people, the ordinance is useless. We know that under the Old Testament dispensation, Shiloh itself became an hissing, when God had left it. (Jer. xix. 8. and xxvi. 6.) And when the glory of a land is thus departed, Ichabod, may be written on the walls of the house. (1 Sam. iv. 21.)

I detain the reader in the midst of this sad prospect of the present day, which bears with it too much sameness to the days spoken of in this Scripture, to call his attention to what is also said, that the word of the Lord was precious, though there was no open vision; that is, there was no open display, as in the days of their fathers, of the Lord's speaking in and by his servants the prophets; yet the Lord had *then*, as the Lord hath *now*, "a seed to serve him." (Ps. xxii. 30.) And blessed be God, that he hath not left himself without witness in the earth. There are still here and there those in our Jerusalem that "sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof." (Ezek. ix. 4.) To such, the word of the Lord is, and must be always, precious. Yea, they can and do say, with one of old: "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." (Job xxiii. 12.) And like the prophet: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." (Jer. xv. 16.)

Doth the reader desire to ascertain for himself the important question; whether he be of the blessed few

to whom the word of the Lord is precious? The question is easily answered, and by the decision of the Lord himself: "Lord how is it, (said the apostle Jude,) that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" Now observe the Lord's answer: "Jesus said unto him: If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Nothing can more accurately define the true spiritual church of Christ. They that love the person of Christ, love also the words of Christ. They find the sweet savour of them, and make them their meditation all the day, and their eyes outrun the night watches, to be occupied in God's words. As David said, so the child of God can say: "I shall never forget thy word, for by it thou hast quickened me." (Psalm cxix. 93.) They find the word quick and powerful. The soul that is engaged therein is taught to profit. And they discover also, that there is an uniformity in this particular, with the people of God in all ages; so that when they read the Lord's word, and behold the exercises of the people of God, as there expressed, they see as in a glass the image of themselves. The child of God will say, as he reads the experience of holy men of old, groaning under a sense of indwelling corruption, and longing for a deliverance from a body of sin and death: What these men felt, I feel; the workings of corruption in their hearts were the same with mine. And is it thus that the Lord Jesus manifests himself to his people, otherwise than he doth to the world? And am I hereby taught how to apprehend the love of God the Father, and the comings and abidings of both the Father, Son, and Spirit? Blessed be the Lord for this divine teaching.

On the other hand, the Lord Jesus adds a like infallible mark of those who love him not: "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings; and the

word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." Here is seen the exact character of the world, whether professor or profane. Instead of keeping Christ's words, they regard them not. And instead of esteeming them more than their necessary food, nothing is less desired. If through restraint or necessity, they read the Scriptures, they read them as though them read them not. And if they are compelled to go to the house of prayer, constraint, and not a willing mind leads them there. The language of the heart is, like those of old, the prophet speaks of: saying, "When will the new moon be gone that we may sell corn; and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" (Amos. viii. 5.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim that he could not see:"

"And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was; and Samuel was laid down to sleep, that the Lord called Samuel; and he answered, Here am I."

"And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I, for thou calledst me, And he said, I called not; lie down again." (1 Sam. iii. 2.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

We here enter upon the interesting subject of the call of Samuel. And I pray the reader to observe the gracious process by which the Lord was pleased to introduce himself to the knowledge of this youth; and to bring Samuel to the knowledge of the Lord.

It was at the hour of rest and retirement. Samuel was alone; Eli separated from him. Those are hallowed seasons, when the Lord takes occasion to withdraw the objects of his grace from every other object, that he may make them the more sensible of his pre-

sence in personal manifestations. Our glorious Lord himself sought the retirement of the night, for the enjoyment of communion with his Father. For we read, that "when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the evening was come, he was there alone." (Matt. xiv. 23.) But who shall take upon them to say, what passed in those sacred hours between the persons in the GODHEAD? It serves however to teach the Lord's people, the blessedness of being withdrawn from men, to enjoy communion with the Lord. Old Testament saints are rendered memorable in Scripture from their night-visions, and manifestations from the Lord. Jacob's Bethel, and his Beersheba, were no doubt, among the highest enjoyments in the Patriarch's life. (Gen. xxviii. and Gen. xlvi. 2.) And New Testament believers have authority to hope for similar manifestations. The promise of God in relation to the latter day dispensation, is to this amount: that when the Lord would pour out of his Spirit, "our young men should see visions, and our old men dream dreams." (Compare Joel ii. 28, with Acts ii. 17.)

I do admire the particularity also observed in this scriptural record; that this call of Samuel was "ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was." The lamp of God, in the main branch of it, never went out. It was always kept burning; and like the fire on the altar, preserved alive by way of emblem, referring to gospel mysteries. Special, spiritual, personal manifestations to all the Lord's people, are, in every instance, ere the lamp of God goes out; and from the temple of the Lord, where He is whom the ark typified; and "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily." (Col. ii. 9.)

I know not whether my reader is conversant with the shadowy representations of Old Testament days,

which so strikingly set forth, and preach the blessed substance of the New. But if he be not, he will not think it a digression from our subject, while speaking of the lamp of God burning in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was; if I call his attention to some other of the very striking particularities which were among the furniture of the old temple; and which, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, are superseded, and done away under the new.

There were five signs in testimony of the divine glory manifested in the first temple, which were not in the second. The want of which made the ancient fathers, who had seen the house of God which Solomon built, weep aloud, in beholding the second temple, after the people's return from the Babylonish captivity: while the younger Israelites, brought from bondage, and who had never seen any temple before, shouted for joy. (Ezra. iii. 12, 13.) And this gave occasion for the Lord to comfort his people with this gracious assurance: "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing: Yet now be strong O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work; for I am with you saith the Lord of hosts. According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt; so my Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former saith the Lord of Hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Hag. ii. 3—9.)

And when was this divine promise fulfilled, but in that blessed day, when the Son of God, in substance of our flesh, entered this second temple; and in that miracle of miracles which he wrought in driving the

buyers and sellers out of the temple, manifested that a greater than Solomon was there. (John ii. 13.) Then it was, that not only the five signs of the first temple in which the children of Israel took such delight, but all signs and shadows, were with them for ever rendered useless, the substance being come; the type which was a *figure, only for the time present,* ceased for ever.

The five signs were as follows:—*First,* the Urim and Thummim, which were put in the breast-plate of judgment, when the high priest went in before the Lord, and was miraculously instructed in things pertaining to God. The words Urim and Thummim, conveyed as much; signifying lights and perfections, both in, and from, the Lord. The *second* sign was the ark of the covenant, from whence the Lord gave answers to the people, by a clear and audible voice. And from hence it was, that the Lord called unto Samuel, as this relation states, the lamp being in the temple, where the ark of God was. The *third* sign was the fire, flaming upon the altar, which wholly burnt up the sacrifice; to intimate the fiery indignation of God against sin, to devour all the adversaries. And the death and offering of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, once for all, "whereby he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;" the only means of extinguishing this fire upon the altar, which from his death flames no more: "because (as God the Holy Ghost, hath most graciously taught the church by Paul,) we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." (Heb. x. 14. 2 Cor. v. 14.) The *fourth* sign, was the "manifestation of the Shechinah, or divine presence, shadowing the mercy seat; intimating the Lord to be with his people. And the *fifth* sign was the spirit of prophecy; with which the Holy Ghost eminently distinguished those whom the Lord called to the office. (2 Pet. i. 21.)

And how blessedly fulfilled were all those shadowy representations by him, who was, and is, the substance! The Lord Jesus Christ, who by his tabernacling in substance of our flesh, is the visible Jehovah; in whom and by whom, all the executive, open manifestations of God in his trinity of persons are made; he is the true "Urim, and the Thummim," both the light and the life, and sole perfection of his people. (Col. i. 28.) He is the real ark of the covenant, to whom all the preceding were but types and shadows. And he is the New Testament altar, and both the sacrifice and the Sacrificer; by whose offering on the altar of his divine nature, he hath for ever extinguished the just wrath of God against sin; and in whose glorious person and finished salvation, all spiritual worshippers do offer "the sacrifice of praise to God continually; even the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." (Heb. xiii. 10—15.) And He it is, that is substantially the glorious Shechinah; for when "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John i. 14.) And the last of the five signs, namely: "the spirit of prophecy," was eminently manifested in him, to whom the "Spirit was given without measure:" who came the "anointed of the Father, and who is one with the Father, over all, God blessed for ever." Amen. (John iii. 34. Acts x. 38. Rom. ix. 5.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I, for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down." (1 Sam. iv. 5.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The first thing which ought to arrest our minds in the reading of these words, is the gracious condescension of the Lord in his call of Samuel. And let it be observed, that this was not at a time when Samuel was calling on the Lord; for he was laid down to sleep. So that it was the Lord that first called Samuel; and not Samuel first calling on the Lord. In every instance of the call of the Lord's people, we are altogether passive. All, like Samuel, are not only unconscious of the grace of the Lord, but like him, backward to an apprehension of the Lord. As the Holy Ghost hath said of love; "if we love him, it is because he hath first loved us." (John iv. 19.) So must it be equally said of all divine communion: it always begins on the part of God: and if we call on him, it is because the Lord hath first called on us.

And before we pass on to the farther consideration of the subject: the reader will do well, under divine teaching, if he would trace this unspeakable mercy of the call of sinners by the Lord, to its everlasting source; and in those ancient settlements of eternity, behold the love of Jehovah, to the church in Christ, before all worlds. All the streams of that "river which maketh glad the city of our God," flow from this ocean. All the manifestations of grace in time are the result of that "everlasting covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure." The church of the first born, "whose names are written in heaven," are the gift of the Father, betrothed to the Son, and anointed by the Holy Ghost; and hence, during the time state of the church here upon earth, the calling of any, and every one of them, is the fruit and effect of that everlasting love, which the Holy Three in One,

have borne to their persons, as chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world.

It is blessed to run this up to the fountain head, even in our most common mercies. I find it good, when at any time in the Lord's providence, or his grace, I can connect with it, this first predisposing cause. I find the mercy, be it what it may, blessed with a tenfold sweetness, when enjoying both the gift and the Giver. For it becomes a renewed earnest and pledge of God's everlasting and unchanging love and favour. And I find another sweetness in it; and this infinitely exceeds all other considerations; namely, in that I learn, not to estimate God's grace by the greatness of the gift, but by the everlasting love from whence it comes. The love-tokens of my God may be seen, and enjoyed, in the smallest, as well as the largest of his bounties. I do not therefore form my apprehensions of the divine favour, by the thing given; but by the love of the Giver, which is the sole cause of the gift. A wise father may bestow upon his children different degrees of what he gives them; some more, some less, when at the same time, his love is equal to all. So my God and Father, may give to his children, various proportions of his alms, as his wisdom sees to be most fitting for them; but as all comes from the same God and Father, it is the love of the Father that we are to make the standard, to ascertain all his manifestation towards us; and in the smallest gifts, view the aboundings of his heart in love towards us.

In beholding the Scripture account of the call of Samuel, it will be well if every child of God, whom the Lord hath also called by sovereign grace, is enabled to trace the same footsteps of Divine love in his own instance, as was manifested in the instance of this youth: for however diversified that call may be in different ways and by different means, the gracious

act is one and the same. What God the Holy Ghost hath said of the church by Paul, equally belongs to every individual of the church, and must be alike acknowledged by all. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, that being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus iii. 5—7.)

I pray the reader not to overlook the unconciousness of Samuel at the call of God. It appears that he had no apprehension of any other voice than that of Eli; and therefore, at the hearing of his name, he ran to him. And finding his mistake, he returned to his rest again, apparently regardless, as though nothing had happened.

What a subject is here opened for the awakening all the faculties of the redeemed and regenerated child of God! What a world of mysteries are we in: and what a watch-tower would the people of God continually stand upon, had we the power to see things at all times spiritually! No doubt the Lord is watching over his people from everlasting; watering them every moment, and keeping them by night and day, lest any should hurt them. He that knew Jeremiah, before that "he formed him in the belly; and before that he come forth out of the womb; sanctified him, and ordained him to be a prophet unto the nations;" (Jer. i. 5.) he knoweth the persons of all his chosen; and appoints both the time and the place, the when and where, they are to be born in nature; and to be new born in grace. Not a single event in the circumstances of their lives, but what is ordained from everlasting to everlasting. Very blessedly the Holy Ghost hath revealed this unquestionable truth, when certifying in that

Scripture: "the Lord knoweth them that are his." (2 Tim. ii. 19.) And the spouse, in one of her love-songs, concerning Christ, hath sweetly expressed the same, when saying; "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me." (Song vii. 10.) And this the church had full licence to say, from what the Lord himself had said to the same amount, as the Head and Husband of his church; when he declared that he was "set up from everlasting; and that then his delights were with the sons of men." (Prov. viii. 31.)

And was it not the desire of the Lord Jesus Christ, which prompted him to call Samuel? Had not the Lord known him as his own from everlasting, when the Father gave him to him from everlasting; and when he "chose him to be holy in Christ, and without blame before him in love?" And had not the Lord Jesus longed for the hour in which he should make it known unto him? And is it not so in every case and instance of the Lord's people? Jesus waits for the hour of their conversion: hath his eye upon them during all the time of their unregeneracy; longs for the appointed season when he shall call them by his grace; and uniformly, from first to last, is waiting with holy joy, the hour of their deliverance "from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto the living God. Yea, and in all the after stages, through a whole life of grace, is longing for communion with them, whom he calls "his saints that are in the earth, and the excellent, in whom is all his delight." (Psalm xvi. 3.)

The unawakened and unregenerated of the Lord's people, during this state of nature's bondage, can have no conception of this grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, towards them; for like Samuel, when at the first, the Lord calls them, as the Lord did him: for the most part, they have no apprehension that it is the Lord speaking to them; for, if they attend ordi-

nances and means of grace, they discover nothing more in the ministry of the word, but the voice of the minister. But it ought to teach the awakened and regenerated of the Lord's family, not only to form different conclusions, but to take consolation from them. They that know somewhat of the mighty work which the Lord hath wrought on their hearts, may be supposed to be on the look out, for the display of the same act of sovereign grace, on the hearts of others. And as they have felt the power of the Lord in their own salvation, they, above all men, may be supposed to feel most interested for the salvation of others. The child of God will say; he that hath subdued my stubborn nature can subdue theirs. Oh! what unanswerable arguments arise from hence, to hold out faith and patience; and to say with the church of old: "Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." (Isa. xii. 2.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the Lord called yet again, Samuel! And Samuel arose, and went to Eli; and he said, Here am I, for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not my son; lie down again.

"Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord; neither was the Lord yet revealed unto him." (1 Sam. vi. 7.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

So many and so very interesting are the several subjects which present themselves to our view in this divine record, that I can only glance at them shortly, as they rise up before us, without enlarging upon them, as their weighty nature would otherwise demand.

Let the reader first pause over them, to consider the boundless grace of God, as here represented, in this repeated call of Samuel to the knowledge of himself. The freeness, fulness and undeservedness of the grace of God is herein most blessedly displayed. This is indeed, among the most distinguishing features of grace; that it is wholly founded in the divine purpose; and hath nothing to do either with the merit or demerit of man. "I will love them freely," is the language of God. (Hosea xiv. 4.) So that to those who are the objects of divine favour, grace is not procurable by any good, or kept back by any evil. And the ultimate end of the designs of Jehovah, in this manifestation of his sovereignty is expressly said to be, "that in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 7.)

But while we ponder with all suitable and becoming reverence this most gracious act of God, in the freeness, fulness, and undeservedness of his mercy; let us not overlook what is said of Samuel, of his ignorance of the Lord, nor of the surprising effect the display of such distinguishing grace must have had upon the mind of Samuel, when it came to be all unfolded. Samuel, it is said, "did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him." And what a very sweet instruction ariseth from hence, to all the people of God! Who shall say, what watchings over, and what love-calls are made; and what communications are for ever going on from the Lord Jesus to his people, during the whole time of their unregeneracy, and all the while they remain unconscious both of themselves and of the Lord! Very blessedly doth the Holy Ghost teach this lesson, by his servant Jude, when speaking of the church, "being sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ." (Jude i.) So that

not all the fall in Adam, nor all the inherent guilt and filth, and debased state of our whole nature, both by original, and by actual sin, hath destroyed or can destroy the first and eternal union between Christ and his church. Our ignorance of the Lord, until called by sovereign grace, makes no alteration in the Lord's knowledge and love of us. Blessed consideration for the church always to have in view.

And let the reader judge for himself, for it beggars all attempts to describe, what must be the first effects wrought upon the mind of every child of God, when brought to a spiritual apprehension of the Lord's revealing himself in such a way of grace! As the Lord himself said, so all the church of the Lord discover, when once a work of grace is wrought upon the soul; "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not." (Isaiah lxv. 1.) What thoughts of the Lord, or of the Lord's gracious drawing nigh to his soul had Samuel, in that memorable night, when he lay down to rest! How little apprehension had he that he needed such divine communications, from an ignorance both of the Lord, and of his own heart! Yea, when he had heard the Lord's voice, once and again, so unconscious was he of it, that he still mistook it for Eli! And such is the case, more or less, in every instance of the Lord's first manifestations to his people. How unawakened to all spiritual concerns was Zaccheus when he climbed the tree, merely from curiosity, to see Christ; and how astonished must he have been, when he found that the eye of Jesus was first upon him, and he heard the Lord's voice, calling him by name, and saying, "Zaccheus! make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." (Luke xix. 1—9.) Who could have persuaded Matthew to the belief of the wonderful events of that day, when Jesus passed by, and called him

by grace, if in the morning, when he went as usual, to his gainful office of the publican, it had been said; Before night, thou wilt leave all, and follow Jesus! (Matt. ix. 9.) Little do we see into the ways and workings of the Lord; when at any time, the Lord is preparing his appointments, for the calling home to the knowledge of himself his people. They are led to this, or that means of grace. They are brought under such, or such a word. This or that providence of God is made instrumental, "to deliver them from the power of darkness, and translate them into the kingdom of God's dear Son." (Col. i. 13.) And when thus brought acquainted with the visions of God, they are led frequently to exclaim with Jacob, as he did at Bethel: "Surely, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not!" Or, with the spouse in the Canticles, when suddenly discovering a glimpse of her Lord, she cried out; "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadab." (Gen. xxviii. 16. Song vi. 12.)

I beg the reader not to pass over unnoticed, as striking a particularity as any in this call of Samuel by the Lord: namely, that it was altogether personal. Eli, heard not the voice of the Lord; it was only Samuel. And this is invariably the case, in every instance in the effectual calling of the Lord's people. In that beautiful parable of our Lord's where Jesus calls himself, "the good Shepherd," and his people his flock; the Lord draws the line between his people and the world. "My sheep, (he saith) hear my voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name and he leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." On the other hand, they that are not his sheep, "enter not in by the door into the

sheep-fold, but climb up some other way." Of all such, Jesus saith; "that they are thieves and robbers." (John x. 1—16.)

And the foundation of all this is in the covenant transactions of eternity; when Christ received all the persons of his people, from the Father, and their names were written in the book of life. (Rev. xiii. 8.) And hence the Holy Ghost, by the prophet, saith; that "the flocks shall all pass again under the hand of him that telleth them." (Jer. xxxiii. 13.) A plain proof that they had passed before. And this was shadowed forth, under the Old Testament dispensation, when the High priest bore the names of the children of Israel on his breast-plate, when he went in before the Lord. So our glorious and Almighty High Priest, wears the names of all his redeemed on his heart, and on his arm. (Song viii. 6.) And as it is said, that he "telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names;" (Psalm cxlvii. 4.) how much more his people! When John saw the Lord Jesus Christ three-score years after his ascension: he saw him, with seven stars in his right hand, and in the midst of seven candlesticks, and which the Lord himself explained: "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels, (the ministers) of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches." (Rev. i. 16—20.) Hence, when the Lord cometh to bless one of his, it is all personal. He calleth them all by name. Not now, as before the coming of Christ, in an outward voice, like this to Samuel: but by an inward power accompanying his word in the heart; speaking personally to the particular state and circumstances of his people; so that the child of God is constrained to say as David did: "I shall never forget thy word, for by it thou hast quickened me."

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli; and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me.

"And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child." (1 Sam. iii. 8.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I DETAIN the reader at the opening of this Scripture, to remark to him, how delightful is the Lord's continuation of grace to his chosen! "God (saith Elihu,) speaketh once; yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not." (Job xxxiii. 14.) But here, we have the Lord thrice calling on Samuel. Let the reader say for himself, how fulfilled is that sweet Scripture: "And therefore doth the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted that he may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him." (Isa. xxx. 18.) Surely the Lord delighteth in calling upon his people; yea, and by name. "I know thee by name," (said the Lord to Moses, Exod. xxxiii. 12, 13.) And so the Lord doth all his redeemed.

The reader will not overlook the backwardness in Samuel, to the apprehension of the quarter from whence the call came. He still had no consciousness that it was the Lord. A confirmation of what the Scripture before declared; that "Samuel did not yet know the Lord; neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him." And it is impossible by the mere exertion of any natural powers to know the Lord. The divine truths of God can only be discovered when opened by the Spirit; and to regenerated spiritual minds. (1 Cor. ii. 14.)

It is a blessed opening of this Scripture, to the great purposes intended from it, in that which is said at the

third call of Samuel: "Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child." No doubt the mind of the aged priest was taught to make this conclusion. The repeated call of Samuel by name, personally and particularly, carried, in his view, the call of God. It was divine, powerful, continued, and with authority. And Eli, no doubt, being taught of God, was led to consider, that it could be no other.

And what are the calls of God *now* to be distinguished by, but with these infallible signs! The Holy Ghost, describes it by these accompaniments: "The voice of the Lord is powerful. The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. The voice of the Lord, divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh." (Psalm xxix. 4--8.) There is a mighty sound in the wind: thunders and lightnings are awful, and tremendous sounds. But no sounds like the sounds of God's voice. No shaking of the wilderness like the convulsions excited in the soul by the call of God. Dividing flames, is nothing to the dividing asunder of "soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow," by the quick and powerful word of God. (Heb iv. 12.)

The reader would do well to pause here. If Eli, perceived that the Lord had called Samuel; what are the marks and signs by which the Lord's chosen ones *now* shall discover that they are called by sovereign grace? Surely, the same powerful, deeply-affecting, and humbling impressions, which were here wrought in Eli's mind. "Never man spake like this man," said the Jews of Christ. (John vii. 46.) None but God can speak as God.

We have a beautiful illustration of this in the instance of the prophet Elijah. The prophet had shewn an ardent zeal in the cause of God, at a time of prevailing ungodliness in Israel. And when

his life was sought for to destroy him, the prophet arose and went for his life into the wilderness of Beersheba. "And he came thither to a cave, and lodged there. And behold the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away." Now observe the gracious method the Lord took, to assure the prophet of his love and favour. "And the Lord said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord: but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire, a still small voice. And it was so, that when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood at the entering in of the cave." (1 Kings xix. 1—13.)

Here we have the Lord speaking to his servant the prophet; not as in the first call of Samuel, in the house of the Lord, but in the more advanced state of grace in the knowledge of the Lord, in the wilderness, and when brought into wilderness dispensations. And let the reader observe, how the man of God stood out the tremendous manifestation of the wind rending the rock, the earthquake, and the fire; for the Lord was in neither of them: but when the still small voice came, Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle. Nature feels nothing, but like adamant, stands unmoved under all dispensations, until grace comes to the soul. Let but the Lord speak, though

but in the whispers of his love, and then down fall all the proud thoughts of our before unhumbled hearts. And never do the saints of the Lord lay lower in the dust before the Lord, than when the Lord's overwhelming goodness riseth above the highest water-marks of our unworthiness. The prophet Elijah could not brook the triumphs of the ungodly; he expostulated with the Lord; but when answered in the love tokens of the still small voice, he takes shame and confusion before the Lord, and wraps his face in his mantle.

Let not the reader overlook the personal interest that every regenerated child of God hath in this history. A most profitable lesson is here read to the whole church of God, in all those various ways by which the Lord is pleased to manifest himself to them, "otherwise than he doeth to the world." His grace is the same in all. All the persons of the Lord's people are alike the objects of the Lord's love. For as none are called or saved, from any merit or deservings of their own; so all, both old and young, are equally held in the arms of everlasting love; and with equal manifestation of the same divine favour. The Lord is leading them by the "right way to the city of habitation." And as it is very blessedly said of the Lord Jesus, in allusion to his pastoral tenderness and care; so is it shewn in all the plans of his providence as well as grace: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom: and gently lead those that are with young." (Isa. xl. 11.)

The gracious method which the Lord took in calling Samuel, became productive, it is probable, in the after stages of his life, of numberless spiritual enjoyments. The Holy Ghost hath graciously marked the history of Samuel's call, with his own emphasis: "Samuel did not yet know the Lord." And what an

endearing way was this, in beginning the acquaintance! Often, no doubt, in the days which followed, did the prophet look back upon it; and with increasing pleasure at every renewed review, mark it down in the memorandums of his life. And when exercises arose in his more ripened days of grace; this beginning could not fail of producing comfort upon every occasion. And should it not be so with all the Lord's people? May not every child of God, whom God hath called by sovereign grace, in every contemplation of the unlooked for, and unmerited mercy, truly say: Did my God think of me, when I thought not of him; and will he not hear me, when I call upon him? Was the Lord gracious then, when my heart was harder than the nether millstone; and will he not be gracious now, when he himself hath softened it with his love? Is not God the same God still; and shall any change take place in his Almighty mind, who is himself unchangable, "the same, yesterday, to day and for ever?" What the church of old said, may every child of God say now: "Behold! God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." (Isa. xii. 2.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Therefore Eli said unto Samuel; Go lie down; and it shall be if he call thee, that thou shalt say: Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

"And the Lord came and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel! Samuel! Then Samuel answered, Speak, for thy servant heareth.' (1 Sam. iii. 9, 10.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I DO not mean to enter into that part of the history which hath reference to Eli, and his house. I wish simply to confine the subject to the call of Samuel.

And even this is in itself so ample, that I must compress a great deal into a little compass.

And *first*, let not the reader overlook the graciousness of the Lord, in his advances towards the object of his love; in not only going on a second and a third time to call him; but now repeating his name; Samuel! Samuel! As if, (and which is the case) the Lord not only knows all his people, and calls them all by name; but delights in their name. It was in the same endearing way the Lord spake to Moses in the mount: "I know thee by name, and thou has found grace in my sight." (Exod. xxxiii. 12.) And looking forward to gospel times, the Lord declared by his servant the prophet Isaiah, that the church should be so known: "Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name." (Isa. lxii. 2.) A new name, in the renewal of the child of God in regeneration, by which the Lord named each individual of the mystical body of Christ; when before all worlds they were chosen in Christ, and were predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself. This is as the Lord saith elsewhere: Even unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place, and a name, better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." (Eph. i. 4, 5. Isa. lxvi. 5.) And the same blessed truth is carried on through the whole of the gospel church. Our adorable Lord is said to "call all his sheep by name." (John x. 3, 4.) And he saith himself: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God; and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name." (Rev. iii.)

It is a subject of everlasting comfort and holy joy,

that the names of the Lord's people are not only written in the book of life, but their persons are known by name; and the Lord loveth to call them by name, and to reveal himself to them by name. As in the instance of Old Testament saints, when the Lord spake to them, it was personally by name; and so now in the case of all New Testament believers; the Lord manifests himself spiritually to them by name, and speaks personally to their hearts, as letters of love-tokens, sent down from heaven, to testify to them his unchanging affection. "Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land, Beulah; for the Lord delighteth in thee; and thy land shall be married." (Isa. lxii. 4.)

In the second place, let the reader remark, the special, personal, and retired manner, in which the Lord revealed himself to Samuel. As is said to one of the seven churches, in the book of the Revelations: so is it now in effect said to every individual of the church: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna; and will give him a white stone, and in the stone, a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." (Rev. ii. 17.) Nothing could more decidedly manifest this divine truth, than in the instance of Samuel. During all the time that Samuel at the first and second call of the Lord was running to Eli, and laying down again, there was no manifestation of the Lord's mind to him; but when retired from Eli, and brought into a frame of mind to hear what the Lord would say: then the Lord opened to him the vision. Such for the most part, are all the revelations which are personally made to the people of God. As the word expresseth it in the Proverbs; "that thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee." (Prov. xxii. 19.) General truths may be spoken generally, but the special and personal apprehension of them, is from divine teaching. When the

Lord directs his word to the heart and conscience of any of his people, faith takes home the application, as directed to his own circumstances, and receives it as his own; "To you is the word of this salvation sent." (Acts xiii. 26.)

We have a beautiful illustration of this, in the instance of the Lord's first appearance to Mary Magdalen, after he arose from the dead. It appears, from the relation given by the Evangelists, that the two Marys and Joanna, and certain other women, had come early to the sepulchre, on the morning of Christ's resurrection; and several of the disciples also followed them; and when they arrived at the door of the sepulchre, "they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass as they were much perplexed thereabout, that behold two men stood by them in shining garments, which declared to them the wonderful relation of Christ's resurrection. Upon this, the disciples and the women, wondering at what they had seen, went away again unto their own home. "But Mary stood without weeping."

Now, during the whole of these transactions, (as appears by the sequel,) the Lord was present, but suffered all to depart, except this poor woman. He chose to be alone. Therefore, all but she went away before that he came forth to view. There is somewhat very blessed in this. Jesus loves to reveal himself to his people in secret. She was to have the honour of the first manifestation of a risen Saviour; but this was to be alone. Even the apostles were not to have this privilege. Jesus therefore waited their departure, before that he made himself known to Mary. As in the instance of Samuel, none were to be privy to this personal revelation of the Lord. Eli shall have the relation of it, but Eli himself shall not be present, neither shall he be conscious of what passed between the Lord and his servant.

There is another very precious instruction ariseth from hence. The disciples, and all but Mary, however, astonished from what had happened, soon left the sepulchre, making at that time no further inquiry concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Even the apostles went away unto their own home. Not so Mary. She still stood without weeping. And as she wept, she looked into the sepulchre. Neither doth it appear that the appearance of the two angels, who accosted her, dressed in the garb of men, either affrighted or diverted her from her enquiry after Jesus. I pray the reader to observe, how uniformly, in all the manifestations the Lord is about to make of himself, he prepares the minds of his people for what he is preparing for them. So it was with Mary. So it was with Samuel. So is it with all the Samuels and Marys of every generation in the church. The Lord brings them into a suited frame for the discovery of himself. He prepares them to receive him. He calls them by name, as he did Samuel and Mary. He speaks to their case and circumstances, and they hear his voice. And thus the Lord makes a manifold distinction in revealing himself to his people, otherwise than he doth to the world.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh; for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh, by the word of the Lord." (1 Sam. iii. 21.)

### NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The limits I must observe in a work of this kind will not suffer me to trespass further in the relation of the call of Samuel. Let me only, before I close, beg the reader to observe with me, the graciousness of the Lord in the continuance of his favour. What

it is now, in the present day of the church, so it was then; and hath been in all ages of the church; "being confident (saith the apostle) of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Philipp. i. 6.)

And let every one who reads this part of Samuel's history, and feels interested to be made partaker of the like grace, take encouragement from the perusal. The Holy Ghost hath not, without a special design, caused it to be recorded, and handed it down to the church, with such marks of his favour. Let the whole of the Lord's people, and especially the younger branches of the Lord's family, take the sweetness of it to themselves. Surely, none will presume to call in question the powerful operation of the word of the Lord upon the hearts of his people, when in the instance of a youth, like Samuel, and at a time when he himself was utterly unconscious what grace meant, that work was so strikingly shown.

And let me only add this one observation more, which belongs equally to the whole church of Christ, whether babes or young men, or fathers; namely, that all the histories of the Bible, both in the Old Testament and the New, were evidently designed to set forth this most blessed truth; that if the Son of God, before his openly tabernacling in our flesh, thus in his manifestations to his people, meant to shew how much he longed for the time of coming, to redeem his church; and since his resurrection, by the many appearances he made to his disciples, before he returned to glory, as plainly testified, that though no longer present with them in flesh, yet is he always present with them in spirit: it plainly follows, that by the ministry of his word and ordinances, he is, (as he said himself, before his departure,) "always with them, even to the end of the world." Amen.

# DAVID GOING IN BEFORE THE LORD.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord. And he said, Who am I, O Lord God; and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?

"And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God: but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while yet to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?

"And what can David say more unto thee? For thou, Lord God, knowest thy servant." (2 Sam. vii. 18—20.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

This Scripture brings before the church the patriarch David in a season peculiarly interesting. The man after God's own heart, so called, brought under manifestations of divine grace and mercy. (2 Sam. vii. 1.) The former part of the chapter states the time when this most gracious communion took place between the Lord and his servant. It is said, that it was "when the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies." And the subject, by the wonderful communication from the Lord, shews the infinite graciousness of it, in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This man, who stands forth in the Scripture record, as among the noblest monuments of free sovereign grace, had it in contemplation to build an house for the Lord. During the earlier part of his life, so great was his ardour for the honour of the Lord, that he declared, "that he would not give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eye-lids, until he had found out a place for the

ark of the Lord; and an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." (Psalm cxxxii. 4, 5.) And now, towards the close of his days, he determined to build a more suited and permanent tabernacle for the reception of the ark, a well known type of the Lord Jesus Christ. "See, (said he to the prophet Nathan) I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains." It is very blessed to behold the workings of grace in gracious souls. There certainly is felt and enjoyed at certain seasons, by every redeemed and regenerated child of God, a oneness and union in Christ; so as to take interest and concern in all that belongs to Christ. And we have Scripture authority, that the Lord takes it kind from his people. Solomon, after the death of David, when he had built the temple, was instructed to say as much: "The Lord said unto David my father, whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name; thou didst well that it was in thine heart" (1 Kings viii. 18.) And let men say what they will, amidst all the workings of corruption in the unrenewed part of our nature, in flesh and blood, the regenerated man, in those ascensions of grace in the spiritual mind, when wound up to the contemplation of God's own blessedness, and God's own glory, loses sight of self; and values nothing in comparison, so that God be but glorified.

The prophet Nathan, unacquainted at that time of the Lord's purposes concerning David, from these workings of grace in his soul, but drawing conclusions from general promises, that the thing was from the Lord, "said unto the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart, for the Lord is with thee." But not so: the Lord designed the ministry of David to be called forth another way. The Lord had indeed stirred up his servant's mind to manifest his love, in this desire, to the Lord's glory; but not in the accomplishment would the Lord have it shewn. Therefore, without

loss of time, the self same night, "the word of the Lord came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord: Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent, and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, why build ye not me an house? Now therefore, (said the Lord by the prophet,) so shalt thou say unto my servant David, thus saith the Lord of Hosts: I took thee from the sheep-cote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel. And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more as before time, and as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the Lord telleth thee, that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up my seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And

thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David."

Then follows the relation of the effect which this message from the Lord wrought on the mind of David. "Then went king David in and sat before the Lord."

Let the reader now attend to some of the very blessed things contained in these most gracious promises of the Lord; and first, and which is indeed the highest and the best, and comprehensive of every other blessing, is of what is contained in the glorious covenant of the ever-blessed God, in his Trinity of persons, as manifested to the church in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. That the patriarch David understood the whole as relating to this, and to be fulfilled in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, is evident from what he said soon after. "For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, O Lord God, hast thou done all these great things;" (ver. 21.) that is, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, the uncreated word. For there had been nothing of the kind spoken to David before. And of the written word, there were no Scriptures then extant which predicted the person of Christ under the similitude of an house. And all that followed on this subject, in this descriptive way, in after Scriptures was borrowed from this. With David, in this vision, the subject opened. And hence, in that precious Scripture, the 89th Psalm, we have the great features more particularly marked. If the reader will consult it, he will discover the very words themselves, similar to this vision, recorded. The Psalm opens in these words: "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever; with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, mercy

shall be built up for ever; thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens." Then observe what follows: "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne unto all generations. Selah." (Psalm lxxxix. 1—4.) And of this oath, God the Holy Ghost is graciously pleased to tell the church by the mouth of Peter, on the day of Pentecost; when we read, that "David being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ, to sit upon his throne." (Acts ii. 30.) So that here is at once the most palpable and decided proof, that not David's son Solomon, nor any of the seed of Adam, after the flesh, but to Christ this Scripture expressly alludes; and David perfectly understood it so; that it was of Christ, and him alone, the promise referred. And no doubt it was this which overwhelmed the patriarch's mind, and caused the expression to burst forth with such humbleness from his heart, when he said, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God, for thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house, for a great while to come."

I beg the reader to pause over this view of the subject, for it is most blessed. From the comparative statement of these Scriptures, nothing can be more satisfactory, in confirmation of that precious doctrine; that all the patriarchs and saints of the Old Testament, lived, and died in the faith of Christ; "not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hence by faith, with an eye to Christ, Abel offered a more ac-

ceptable sacrifice than Cain. Hence by faith, Noah prepared an ark, as beholding Christ set forth in that ark; "the hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." Hence by faith, Abraham offered up his only begotten son, expressly with an eye to the offering in after-ages of God's only begotten Son. (Heb. xi. throughout.) Hence David eyed Christ, in this promise of God's building him an house, and the salvation of his people: and in the confidence of which he took comfort, amidst all the sad circumstances of himself and his children; the Lord having made with him, "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." (2 Sam. xxiii. 5.) So that those holy men of old, and all the faithful in like manner, in every generation of the church, before the coming of Christ, lived in the full assurance of this faith. They beheld the promises afar off; but this had not the smallest effect to lesson their conviction of them. Their faith gave to their minds a present subsistence of them. It substantiated and realized them, as if they had them in actual possession; and like those glasses, which magnify and bring home to the eye the object, however remote, in full vision; their faith gave as great an assurance of their reality, as had they lived in the days of Christ, when the Son of God went in and out before his disciples in Jerusalem.

I must entreat the godly reader not to pass away from this view of the subject, until that he hath first examined his own personal interest in the same. You profess to believe in all the great and distinguishing doctrines of the gospel. But the question is, how is this manifested? The personal knowledge of, and communion with, the glorious persons in the Godhead, in, by, and through the Lord Jesus Christ, is the only standard to ascertain the spiritual church of Christ. Where these things are known, lived upon,

and enjoyed, they realize and substantiate, and prove all the glorious truths of revelation. They are inlaid in the soul, like the Mosaic pavement of the tabernacle. They are incorporated in the renewed nature, "in the hidden man of the heart." Carnal, unenlightened, and unregenerated persons, will talk of these things; yea, and acknowledge their conviction of them; but this is only in reason and argument; and there is as much difference between the mere consent of the understanding in head knowledge, and the spiritual apprehension in heart influence, as between the mere sight of food, and the partaking of it. The reader will do well to form his faith according to the standard of those holy men of old. And very sure I am, that not one of them possessed our advantages. The highest attainment of the highest saint of God, under the Old Testament dispensation, looked but to the coming of Christ. You and I have seen him come. He hath done what was only then predicted of him. "He hath finished transgression; made an end of sin; made reconciliation for iniquity; and brought in an everlasting righteousness." (Dan. ix. 24.) Hence, therefore, if all the saints of God, in those days, lived and died triumphant, in the prospect of Christ, coming for those blessed purposes; what ought our faith now to be, in what Christ hath done in the full accomplishment? Surely, we have cause to blush, as we read the history of those men; who, after they were illuminated, "endured a great fight of afflictions, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better, and an enduring substance." (Heb. x. 34.)

But we must not stop here. In the view of those gracious discoveries made to David, on this most interesting subject, as it concerns the church of Christ, it will be proper to look somewhat more

closely into the several features of it, in order to mark the Lord's loving-kindness to his people; a sense of which so wrought upon the mind of the patriarch, when under the impression, that he went in before the Lord, and cried out, "Who am I, O Lord God: and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? And what can David say more?"

It hath been already observed, that David understood those promises to refer to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And had we any doubt on this ground, the words which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, delivered to the church, would fully remove. Speaking of David, the apostle said, "that being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ." (Acts ii. 20. 31.)

But where are we to look for this oath? Nathan in his message to David, from the Lord, spake nothing of it. And yet the Holy Ghost was graciously pleased that the church should know that the glorious truths promised to David by the Lord, through Nathan, was confirmed by an oath. And if the reader will look for it in the 89th Psalm, and especially from the 19th verse to the close of the 37th, he will find the whole; both the oath, and the solemn transactions respecting it, recorded to the fall: "Once have I sworn by my holiness, (saith God) that I will not lie unto David."

I pray the reader to remark with me, the graciousness of God in this, as well as in numberless other occasions, revealed in the Scriptures. God swore once, it is said. But God delights to speak of it often. (See Psalm lxxxix. 3.) And there is a great blessedness in this once swearing; because that once is enough, for God's oath is irrevocable. And there

is another great blessedness in the oath of God; namely, in that "he hath sworn by his holiness." As much as to say, Let me cease to be holy, if I break this oath. So that the church of God, whose whole nature by the fall, in every individual instance, is unholy in herself, yet from being chosen in Christ, and accepted in Christ, hath the holiness of Jehovah pledged to her in covenant promises, for the fulfilment of all blessedness in the person of Christ, and interest in all that is due to the work by Christ: God having sworn for both, by his holiness, that he will not lie to Christ.

And the subject extends still farther, in relation to our Lord Jesus Christ. For, speaking of Him, under this endearing character, the Lord said, while describing his house, and his kingdom to be for ever, "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men, but my mercy shall not depart from him." Perhaps it may be asked by some, Can such things be said of Christ? Was he not "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens?" The answer is, what is said of Christ in this Scripture, is said of him as the Head and Surety of his people. And therefore, though in himself, "he knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" yet as the representative of his body the church, he "bore all their sins, and carried their sorrows, for the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." Hence we read, he was made both sin and a curse; *sin*, for us, when he knew no sin; and a *curse*, to redeem us from the curse; and "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (Gal. iii. 13. 2 Cor. v. 21.)

And this is the very marrow of the gospel. This is the whole sum and substance of redemption. So spake the Lord by his servant the prophet; and so

by faith the Lord's people live in the enjoyment of it. "My righteous servant shall justify many, (saith the Lord) for he shall bear their iniquities." (Isaiah liii. 11.) Hence we hear the holy Sufferer, when speaking in the Spirit of prophesy, expressing himself in the words of the foregoing Psalm: "But thou hast cast off and abhorred; thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant; thou hast profaned his crown, by casting it to the ground, and the like." (See Psalm lxxxix. 38, to the end.) And these things were all, and more literally, fulfilled in the person of Christ; when, as the Head and Surety of his church and people, he stood forth under the pressure of our sins; and when in the accomplishment of our salvation, he sustained those agonies in the garden and on the cross, which are so circumstantially related by all the evangelists. I stay not to particularize. The limits I must observe in this little work would not admit of it. But let the reader, in faith and meditation, follow Christ to the garden of Gethsemane, and to the foot of the cross; and if he be under divine teaching, the wonderful subject will overwhelm his mind with the striking correspondence beween the relation of the prophets and evangelists; that of the Lord Jesus alone, both wrote; for to no other could they ever refer.

And from what hath been before observed on this subject, it will as plainly appear, that in common with other of the Old Testament saints, to whom the days of Christ were seen afar off, David had such spiritual apprehensions in his mind of the person and sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. When Nathan brought this message to him from the Lord, he could find no words to express himself, but to exclaim, "Who am I, O Lord God; and what is

my house? And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?—And what can David say more?"

But we go on to the consideration of another beauty in this Scripture; namely, David's own personal interest in the blessings here revealed to him; and which, on receiving the message from the prophet, could not fail to call up to the recollection of his mind all the past events of his life. "Now therefore, so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I took thee from the sheep-cote. I made the ruler over my people. I was with thee, whithersoever thou wentest. I have cut off all thine enemies," &c. And the Lord rested not here; for the gracious message carried on David's history, through the whole of life, and in death, and for ever. "When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name: and I will set up the throne of his kingdom for ever."

What a subject was here! And observe, delivered from the Lord himself, through the ministry of his servant the prophet. No wonder the heart of David melted under the rehearsal of such distinguishing mercies of the Lord. Indeed, from the expresssions used by the patriarch, it appears as if the Lord had dissected his very soul, and laid open to view all the workings therein.

And I pray the reader not to overlook the very gracious manner which the Lord was pleased to adopt in his message to David on this occasion. In calling to his mind the sheep-cote, where the Lord found him, and from whence the Lord took him, when first called by sovereign grace; he led the son of Jesse instinctively back to the recollection of that memorable day; when after the rejection of David's ten

elder brethren, at the command of Samuel, he was sent for from the field to be anointed to the kingdom. Hereby not only reminding David of being the special and personal object of distinguishing grace; but also becoming thereby a lively type of Him, who was "chosen from among his brethren." Surely, as the prophet repeated the Lord's words, "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts; I took thee from the sheep-cote," all the transactions of that solemn season must have rushed upon his mind; and the prophet's horn of oil, poured upon his head in the anointing him; and the prophet's voice, proclaiming the Lord's election of him: could not fail to have recurred with full power to his apprehension, as when the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he." (1 Sam. xvi. 1—13.)

But it is time to drop the subject, in relation to the history of David: and inquire into the scriptural and spiritual improvement of it, in relation to ourselves.

And shall I begin it, with asking my reader, whether he hath known enough of the Lord, and enough of himself, in the plague of his own heart, to go in as David did, before the Lord; and under gracious impressions, to express himself in similar terms of humiliation before God, and say, "Who am I, O Lord God; and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?"

Hear me, I pray you. Hath the Lord, in any moment of your life, done by you as by the prophet; taken you by the hand, and led you into the review of "the chambers of imagery in your own heart?" (Ezek. vii. throughout.) In other words: Hath the Lord made you so acquainted with yourself, as to "loathe yourself in your own sight;" and so acquainted with the person and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he is in your view, "the altogether lovely, and the chiefest among ten thousand?" If these things are wrought in your soul, they are the sovereign act

of the same Almighty arm that took David from the sheep-cote; for none less than God himself could be competent to the deed. It was needful, as in this man's instance, to send the prophet to single him out from among his brethren, in an open manifestation of the Lord's distinguishing grace; yet in your instance, as well as his, if the Lord hath called you with an holy calling, you may discover, through divine teaching, wherein the Lord hath made you to differ from others; yea, and from yourself also, from what you were before, in the days of your unregeneracy. Nay, cannot you look back and observe, as among the Eliabs, and Abinidabs, and Shammah's, the seven other then nameless sons of Jesse, which when David was singled out and chosen, passed in review before the prophet, and were rejected? Do not you call to mind among your contemporaries, among whom you spent many of your youthful days, who have been passed by unheeded and uncalled; and yet whose appearance in countenance and in stature, were much more commanding than yours? Surely, in the review, the very soul of the regenerated child of God cannot but melt, and be constrained to cry out with the astonished apostle: "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John xiv. 22.) How often may it be seen in life, both of men and women, persons of the noblest form, and commanding aspect both for natural beauty, and natural endowments, while totally destitute of grace; and on the contrary, many of the Lord's humble ones, deformed in body, and of the slenderest abilities in mind, yet enjoying a Naphtali's portion, "satisfied with favour and full of the blessing of the Lord." (Deut. xxxiii. 23.) And how striking the Lord's words: "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance; but the Lord looketh on the heart." (1 Sam. xvi. 7.) Oh! who that knows him-

self to be the object and the subject of sovereign grace; that looks round, amidst the dying and the dead, of the present Eliabs, and Abinidabs, and Shammahs, in the shipwreck of our fallen, ruined nature, the carcasses of some floating, and others sunk to rise no more; but must feel sensibly alive to the distinguishing mercy; and having been brought by an Almighty arm to that rock, which as David said, "is higher than I;" like the messenger to Job, makes known the wonderful tale, in the loving kindness of the Lord, and cries out, "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee." (Job. i. 15, &c.)

But we must not stop here: The Lord that took David from the sheep-cote, said also to David, "And I was whithersoever thou wentest; and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth." &c. Here the Lord reminded the patriarch of what took place subsequent to the Lord's first calling him; and thereby opened another heart-melting subject to David, in the contemplation of his own life. I must not indulge myself in running over even the outlines of David's history, in proof of what the Lord said; but I beg the gracious reader not to be too hasty in passing over the review of his own. Every child of God in every age of the church, may furnish to himself similar proofs of the same; and fill an huge volume of the Lord's gracious dealings with him, all the way along the path of life. For what the Lord said to Jacob, and Jacob said to the Lord, more or less, suits the whole family of grace. "I will not leave thee, said the Lord, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." (Gen. xxviii.) And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which said unto me, return to thy country, and to thy kingdom, and I will deal well with thee. I am not worthy of the

least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands." (Gen. xxxii. 9, 10.) It would be a pleasing as well as profitable employment of the Lord's people, to keep journals how the Lord is dealing with them; and how they are dealing with the Lord. We lose a thousand spiritual enjoyments for want of such records; for our minds are like leaky vessels, which retain but little; and that little too often unprofitable. And it were well also, if to our memorandums, we never omitted daily to seek the sweet teaching of God the Holy Ghost, in that gracious work of his as the "Remembrancer" of Christ Jesus. (John xiv. 26.)

It is a blessed thing when the man of God, like Joshua, towards the close of life, when looking back upon the past, and tracing God's faithfulness in God's promises to come, can make the same appeal as he did. "Behold, (said he) this day I am going the way of all the earth; and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed."

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"For thou Lord God knowest thy servant. For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them." (2 Sam. vii. 20, 21.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

There is a vast deal more contained in these words of the patriarch than at the first view of them may appear. David, when he thus expressed himself concerning the Lord's knowledge of him, not only referred to

the present state of his heart before God, but to what had passed; yea, and what might, and indeed would, and did come to pass, unless restrained by grace. David felt in the moment, when the Lord was thus ransacking all the chambers of his heart, and dissecting all his inside to the very bone, similar to what the apostle Peter felt in after ages, when standing before Christ, and Jesus appealing to him for his love. And David could and did say as the apostle did: "Lord! thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." (John xxi. 17.) But both the patriarch and the apostle, in that profession, had in prospect what had passed in direct defiance of that love. And hence we hear the cry of David's soul in the opening of one of the Psalms: "Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions." (Psalm cxxxii. 1.)

We have hitherto been reviewing the bright side only of David's history. To make the subject profitable, it will be proper to invert the perspective, and look at the dark side in his exercises. Both afford alike interesting memoirs to illustrate the nature of man, and to display the free and sovereign grace of God. And sure I am, that the highest saint of God, in the present hour; yea, and in every age of the church, may, as in a mirror, behold himself in it; and in the contemplation, when like David, going in before the Lord, express himself in similar language to the patriarch: "Who am I, O Lord God; and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?"

Let it not be expected however by the reader, that when I propose taking a view of David, in his infirmities and transgressions, that I am going to enter at large into that part of his history. Neither let it be thought, that I take pleasure in laying open the frailties of great men. Not so. No more will be

adverted to but as the subject may be rendered subservient to illustrate the freedom and sovereignty of divine grace. And no more than, under divine teaching, may be rendered profitable to ourselves; and that from experience of infirmities as might be shewn in every child of God, like David, that our salvation is all of the free gift of God; and as that Scripture blessedly expresses it, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righ eousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. v. 20, 21.)

I begin with that which appears to have been the most improbable and unlikely, after such a distinguishing mark as had been shewn the patriarch, in his election to the kingdom from among his brethren; namely, his frequent want of faith in God. The anointing by the prophet, which was well understood by all Israel, as the Lord's certain token of his choice, ought to have been an everlasting sheet-anchor to him against all the storms he met with in his passage to the throne. But when we hear him say, "I shall now one day perish by the hand of Saul;" (1 Sam. xxvii. 1.) we behold in him, as in all other instances of our fallen nature, the sin of unbelief. Five years had elapsed since the Lord chose him to be king, and since the prophet had anointed him for that purpose, and a series of escapes he had had all the way through. He had fought and conquered Goliah; yea, and had both seen and acknowledged the Lord's hand in his deliverance. He had escaped almost miraculously again and again from Saul. He had found God giving him gracious answers to his prayers, from the apprehension he entertained concerning the men of Keilah; from the rock in the wilderness of Maon; from Hachilah; from the Amalekites; and indeed,

in many other distinguishing tokens of the Lord's special care over him, in going out and coming home. The fears of David, therefore, that he should one day perish by the hand of Saul, when the Lord had chosen him to the possession of the kingdom, upon the death of Saul, appears to have been a weakness that so great a man, one might have thought, was the most unlikely of all others to have fallen into. Had the patriarch not consulted flesh and blood, but kept in view the Lord's dealings with him, all the way as he came along; the many deliverances which had been shewn him, and in such apparently critical moments as he had passed, ought to have been an accumulation of evidences of his safety; and that the Lord had purposely appointed them in succession, to shew David that the Lord was his keeper; and what David himself, in a better moment could and did say: "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." (Psalm cxix. 75.) But we see in David, what every truly regenerated child of God may see in himself, our own nothinguess, and God's all-sufficiency; and that in our best of moments, we can never trust ourselves too little, or the Lord too much.

I beg the reader not to pass away from this view of the patriarch, before that he hath made the subject somewhat personal. Unbelief is the sin of all others which doth most easily beset us. It is inherent in our nature; the essence, the very elixir of our being by the fall; and as impossible to be rooted out, by any exertions of our own, as to the changing the features of our countenance, or the making the hair black or white. I might as soon extinguish the sun in the firmament with my hand, or turn the tide of the ocean with a shell, as extinguish the natural atheism of my own heart by my reasoning, or give a

new current to my affections, in directing them towards God, by moral persuasion. Very blessedly, therefore, hath the Holy Ghost taught the church, that faith is the gift of God. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake." (Heb. xii. 2. Philipp. i. 29.) Hence the apostle makes this conclusion as related to himself; I can of myself do nothing, "but I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." (Philipp. iv. 13.) And it is a paradox, which men of the world can never unriddle, but which every child of God knows to be true, and which in his own instance is daily explained; namely, that of all things, faith in God is the most difficult; and yet of all things, the most easy. Where God gives the grace of faith, what more easy than "to believe the record that God hath given of his Son." But where the heart remains unregenerated, unchanged, it is as easy to raise the dead, as to create faith in that man's soul.

And if the reader be himself a partaker of grace, he may, from this instance of David's unbelief, learn another very sweet lesson. Look at the man after God's own heart, at one time in his life, and then in another; and who more opposite to himself than he? In the case of Goliah, such confidence had he in the Lord, that with a sling and a stone he went forth to battle, assured of success in the name of the Lord. In the case of Saul, such was his timidity, that he said, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." And from whence this difference hath been shewn; but the conviction of man's nothingness thereby remains to be more fully received. If I see a man carrying an open candle in the midst of a tempestuous night, over an heath; blown upon every way, and yet not extinguished; reason is compelled to conclude, that there is somewhat in it more than

natural. And if I behold a child of God, amidst the tempests of sin and Satan, blown upon by the blast of temptations without, and the workings of corruption within, and yet holding out faith and patience; is it not as reasonable, as it is scriptural, to acknowledge, that somewhat more than natural strength is here? The man of Uz was allowedly put in such a situation purposely, that the divine strength might be perfected in human weakness. Satan had charged Job, that he would curse God to his face. (Job ii. 3. 10.) But here, Satan was proved to be "a liar, and the father of it." (John viii. 44.) For though we read that "Job cursed his day;" yet we no where read that he cursed God. (John iii. 1.)

And David's own history affords a similar triumph over self, in the faith he then found in God. I mean, in the case of his flight from Absalom. When David, and his little army, passed over the brook Kidron, (the same memorable brook which the Lord Jesus Christ passed over the night before his sufferings and death, and of which, no doubt, David was a type; John xviii. 1.) Zadock, and the Levites brought away the ark of God to follow the king for the purpose of divine service. The patriarch, at that time strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, said unto Zadock, "Go, carry back the ark of God into the city. If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again; and shew me both it, and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold here am I, let him do unto me as seemeth good unto him." (2 Sam. xxv. 25, 26.) And is this the very David that once said, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul?" Yes! But here we see grace and faith in lively exercise. And in the former, the reasonings of flesh and blood. And let the reader behold the patriarch in his bitter moment of trial. His favourite son, which came from

his own loins, unnaturally seeking his life; and compelling him to flee from his home in a moment of such danger. And what a lovely frame of soul the Lord, that was looking on and regulating all, brought him into. Go, said he to his faithful servant, carry back the ark, which is but an emblem of my God; for I have God himself with me. What my God hath ordained to be the issue of this afflicting dispensation is with him, not with me. If the God of my mercies be pleased to bring me back again in peace; then shall I go up again to the house of my God, and have a spiritual apprehension of his gracious presence. He will shew me both the ark and his habitation. But if he thus say, "I have no delight in thee; behold here am I, let him do with me as seemeth good unto him." He will take me home to himself, where ordinances will be no longer necessary, and my God will be all in all.

Let us look at David in another point of view, under his humbling circumstances. His weakness at times in faith, betrayed him also into sin; and he stands forth a monument of the freeness and sovereignty of grace, which pardoned him in all, and brought him out of all. I do not mean to enter into particulars, for this would not only lead too far, but rather bear away our minds in overlooking in him, what we are also in ourselves; and in whose history of infirmities we may see our own.

It would be perhaps no difficult matter to shew, that in the sharp and trying exercises of David, both in the seasons of his falls, and in the deeps of his afflictions, most interesting subjects arise out of them for instruction to all the Lord's people. And we read to little purpose David's history, or any man's history, when in the view of the depths of sin, we are not led to see, that the nature of all men is alike in all; the same inherency of evil; and the seeds

of the same sins in all; and if not budding or blossoming, or bringing forth deadly fruit, alike in all; the difference ariseth not from any difference in nature, but from the restraints of grace. Such a conviction becomes highly profitable, because such a conviction only can endear Christ. We truly know ourselves, and not before, when, like David, from the depths of sin we cry in the depths of divine mercy. For it is an everlasting truth, that bears the stamp and currency of all ages, where sin is but little felt, mercy will be but little esteemed. And until the sinner is unhinged from himself, and all his own confidences, he never can be brought to hang wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost must carry conviction, like a thunderbolt, through his conscience, of his utterly lost estate by nature; or the heart will never beat in any pulsations of desire towards the Lord for salvation. The history of every child of God becomes a living testimony to this doctrine of holy Scripture: and in David's instance we see it brought forth in proof.

When, in any moment of pressing necessity for food, the patriarch and his little army heard of Nabal's sheep-shearing feast, he sent to this man of Mount Carmel, to beg a few provisions from his plentiful table. The churlishness of Nabal prompted him to send a refusal to David; and David, in the first paroxysms of anger, determined not merely to take vengeance on Nabal, but to destroy both the man and his household together: yea, he called upon God to do so unto him, if he left any that remained to him by the morning light. Here was the boilings of corrupt nature, and injustice in the extreme. But by the interposition of the Lord, the tempest in David's mind was layed. For the Lord stirred up the heart of Abigail, Nabal's wife, to make all suitable provision for David and his soldiers; and hastening to

his camp with it, she presented herself before him, and implored his mercy; adding, as the most persuasive of all arguments, that when the Lord had brought David to his kingdom, whose soul was "bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord his God, that this would be no grief unto him, or offence of heart, that he had not shed blood causeless, or avenged himself." And such were the workings of grace from the Lord, in the heart of David, on this address of Abigail, that smothering the workings of corruption, which had before boiled there so violently; David instantly broke forth in exclamations of praise, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy advice; and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand." (1 Sam. xxv. 2. 33.) Let the reader not fail to remark the order, as well as the fulness, of this thanksgiving of the patriarch, in his blessing on blessing. First, in eyeing and acknowledging the Lord's hand in it; then, the sin-restraining grace, from shedding blood, which this counsel of Abigail had checked; and lastly, the kindness of the instrument by whom the Lord had wrought it. And surely, every regenerated child of God, (were we more attentive than we are to the manifestations of grace) might find in his own history numberless instances, if not in so striking a way as this of David's, yet of similar interposition, in which the Lord keepeth the feet of his saints, and preserves them from falling; sometimes preventing them with his goodness; and at others, restraining them with his power; here correcting, and there comforting, in one plan, hedging up their way with thorns, that they shall not find their lovers; and in another, withering their gourds, so as to blast their expectation of earthly good; and thus accomplishing the holy purposes of

his will; while no less "making all things work together for good to them that love God."

My limits will not suffer me to mention but one instance more in the life of David; and in which are discovered the effects of sin, and the effects of grace, blended in the same person. And both form a beautiful example of the Lord's strength triumphing over man's corruption. The instance to which I refer, is that of Shimei; when, after the awful fall of the patriarch, in the matter of Uriah, the Lord's sentence came to be fulfilled, in evil arising out of his own house, to punish him; and Absolom, his son, drave him from his throne. As the father fled for his life, Shimei came forth and cast stones at David, and cursed him. One of the patriarch's friends proposed to kill Shimei for this; but David restrained him. He saw the Lord's hand in the dispensation, however distressing; and therefore said, "Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him." How cruel and unjust soever it might be, on the part of man, it was both gracious and just on the part of God. "It may be, (said the royal mourner) that the Lord will look on mine affliction; and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day." (2 Sam. xvi. 5, 13.) What followed in the event of this most trying situation I need not add. The holy Scripture hath very fully related it. But the reader will do well to gather the instruction which God the Holy Ghost hath intended for the church from it in relation to his own circumstances. Never should a child of God look to second causes, without steadfastly and steadily keeping in view the first Almighty Mover of the whole. When the prophet Ezekiel beheld in vision the whirlwind from the north, and a great cloud, and a fire, infolding itself with wheels within wheels, moving the machine; the view was too extended for the eye to discern the vast design; and too

complicated for the mind to form any adequate conception of the meaning. But when the prophet beheld One, as the appearance of a man on a throne, in the midst, guiding and directing the whole; though still mysterious, the source of government became discernible; and he fell on his face, in reverence of the glory of the Lord.

It is precisely the same in all the events of the divine administration over his church and people. The whole is involved in one unerring scheme of grace and goodness to the Lord's chosen. No Shimeis of the present day can arise to curse the Lord's people, unnoticed by the Lord. The care of the church is in his hands, and his bridle is in the jaws of their foes. Hitherto shall they go, and no further. "The wrath of man shall praise him; and the remainder of wrath shall he restrain." Nay, it is not enough to say, that the enemies of the Lord's people shall do them no harm; for the Lord will overrule their malignity to do them good. Their curses shall be converted into blessings. And while they come forth to lay the Lord's people low, Jesus doth thereby advance them to greater honour. For the Lord gives them grace not only to believe, but also to suffer shame for his name's sake. This is what the apostle prayed for, and which all, like the apostle, more or less find, they are brought to know "the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." (Phil. ii. 10, 11.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And now, O Lord God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant.

"Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever." (2 Sam. vii. 28, 29.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It is very blessed when the lives of the Lord's people, and their deaths, are in perfect unison with each other. David died, as he had lived, blessing God. And the Holy Ghost hath recorded his last words. They are but few words; but they are very sweet and very weighty words. And what I particularly admire in them is this; David connected his last views of sovereign grace with the first manifestations of that grace. Though a king in Israel, and a great king; yet his low birth, and the sheep-cote, he never lost sight of. "Now these are the last works of David, the son of Jesse; and the man that was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel." He then includes the whole persons of the Godhead in his mercies; the Lord, the Spirit; the God of Israel, and the Rock of Israel: and then takes confidence in his own personal interest, in the Holy Three in One. "Although my house be not so with God; yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. For this is all my salvation, and all my desire; although he make it not to grow." When the dying father looked around him, what sad breaches had death and desolation made in his walls! His children, Amnon and Absalom, and Adonijah; awful monuments of destruction! In himself, a melancholy history of departures and backslidings from God. But in the midst of all, he grasps the assurance of God's everlasting covenant; and died, as he had lived, in believing views of the sure salvation in Christ, and his own personal interest in it. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant." Oh! what a sweetness doth the child of God find when these precious views are testified, and sealed to the soul, "ordered in all things and sure." Well may

every redeemed and regenerated child of God say with David, "This is all my salvation, and all my desire; for salvation is in no other: neither is there any other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts. iv. 12.)

And now, in closing the view which hath been taken of David, in this part of his history, what is, or ought to be, the spiritual improvement, which every redeemed and regenerated child of God, under divine teaching, should gather from it? Surely, in every instance, where there is a sameness of faith, there is a sameness of privileges. And if David, a thousand years before the coming of Christ, in the believing view of Christ, thus enjoyed communion with the Lord; well may both writer, and reader, (if so be both "have tasted that the Lord is gracious,") do the same. In the calculation of time, the church hath entered, and somewhat advanced, in the nineteenth century: and nearly two thousand years have run out, since the Son of God tabernacled openly in our nature, and came and dwelt among us, "finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness." And must not New Testament saints blush, and take shame, if with motives so much greater as ours are, than theirs were, they knew more of communion with God than we? And especially, when to these considerations we add, what John, the last of the apostles in the church, declared under the authority of the Holy Ghost; that the very purpose for which he wrote his epistle in the close of his ministry, was, that the whole body the church might have "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; and that their joy might be full." (John i. 1, 4.) And, if we know nothing of those love-visits, like David, to the Lord, nor of special, personal manifestations from, and communion

with the Lord, in his trinity of Persons; wherein can it be said, that our joy is full; or "that we have joy and peace in believing, and abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost?"

For my own part, I hesitate not to say, and I care not who knows it, that since the Lord hath given me rest from all my spiritual enemies round about; by giving me spiritual, scriptural apprehensions of the love of the Holy Three in One, to my person, as it is in Christ; I find it good, day by day, and morning by morning, to go in before the Lord; and do as David did—sit before the Lord. I find somewhat of the same spirit as he felt; and in the conscious nothingness, and emptiness, and unworthiness of myself, feel a blessed vacuity for the Lord to fill. And I cannot tell the reader the very great savor, which, at times, I find from the Lord in those hallowed seasons. For, since the Lord brought my mind down to the recollection of my original sheep-cote state; and hath thrown all the trumpery furniture of my own fancied attainments into the street; hath stripped me to the very bone of all creature holiness; and left nothing for his Almighty Majesty to enter, but naked walls, and a broken heart, all is just as it should be. This is the way by which the glory must be wholly his, while all the happiness is wholly mine; and the Lord's own words are blessedly fulfilled to my soul's joy: "Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and revive the heart of the contrite ones." (Isaiah lvii. 15.)

And if the reader be of the regenerated family of Christ; and had I the art of persuasion, I would very affectionately recommend him to the same daily visits. Public ordinances are very blessed mediums of communion with our God; but the child of God

hath private transactions also at the heavenly court; when "the heart knoweth its own bitterness; and when also a stranger cannot intermeddle with our joy." Nay, I find it good to go in before the Lord, when I have nothing to say to the Lord; and only from the delight I have in his presence, to place myself before him. In common life, this is usually done. Kindly neighbours and friends will call upon one another, when they have nothing of business to transact; how much more should it be the pleasure of the Lord's people, to be often making visits to Him, who by way of marking his favour towards them more striking, calleth them "not servants, but friends;" and adds, as a farther token of endearment, "For all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." (John xv. 15.) Are we fond of receiving intelligence of good concerning our earthly connections, and for this purpose do we take pleasure in visiting one another, and shall we be backward in going in before the Lord, who will tell us all things concerning the Father?

Moreover, private, personal communion with the Lord, becomes the most infallible proof of our acquaintance with the Lord. There must be some knowledge of the Lord, and a delight in the Lord; where the regenerated child of God is daily making private visits to the Lord. And God the Holy Ghost hath taught the church by this standard to draw the line of distinction "between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." (Malachi iii. 18.) "What is the hope of the hypocrite, (saith Job) though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" (Job xxvii. 8—10.) Now observe, what is the hope of the hypocrite, though

he hath gained? Scripture answers: "The hypocrite's hope shall be as the spider's web, on which nothing shall hang; and which is swept off with the besom of destruction." (Job viii. 14.) Will he call upon God, when trouble comes upon him? Yes: for the prophet saith, "Lord! in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." (Isaiah xxvi. 16.) "Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins." (Jer. xii. 2.) Will he delight himself in God? No: for both in mouth and in reins, he is far from God. Will he always call upon God? No: for Scripture saith, it is only when trouble is upon him. Will God hear his cry? No: for "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight." (Prov. xv. 8.)

Go then, reader, if the Lord be your delight, go as David did, and sit before the Lord. Let him have the first of your morning visits, and the last of your evening meditations. Every redeemed and regenerated child of God should daily walk as on the confines of another world, while passing through this. Like the church of old, we should eye Jesus as she did, continually calling upon us. "My beloved (said she) standeth behind our wall, looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice." (Song ii. 9.) Ere long the wall which at present obscures vision will fall down, and the lattices and windows will be thrown open; and then, with open face, we shall behold the glory of the Lord, we shall see him as he is, and dwell with him for ever.

THE

# QUEEN OF SHEBA

# VISITING SOLOMON.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions." (1 Kings x. 1.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The scriptural record of the queen of Sheba visiting Solomon, becomes the more interesting, and is the more strongly recommended to the attention of the church of God, from the notice which the Lord Jesus Christ himself took of this woman's history, in the days of the flesh. The fastidious indifference and contempt which the Scribes and Pharisees manifested to our most glorious Christ, prompted his divine mind to advert to her as an instance, which would one day condemn their determined stupidity, and applaud her conduct in her anxiety of being taught. "The queen of the south (said Christ) shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here." (Matt. xii. 42.)

And what, indeed, could be an higher reproach to

the nation of the Jews, from the midst of which, according to their own prophets, Christ was to arise, than "that when he came to his own, his own received him not?" And yet in ages remote from this period, and long before the advent of our Lord in the flesh, one of another nation, ignorant of all spiritual knowledge, and to whom the promised Saviour could not from common causes have been known, on the mere report of the fame of Solomon, visited Jerusalem in quest of knowledge. How very striking are the words of the prophets in the earliest ages of the church, on the rejection of the Lord's servants by the unbelievers. The prophet Hosea, speaking of Ephraim, whom, though described like Tyrus, planted in a pleasant place, under the eye of the Lord, yet made slight of his truths: "Give them, (said the prophet) give them, O Lord, what wilt thou give? Give them a miscarrying womb, and dry breasts." (Hosea ix. 14.)

But did not our Lord, when referring to this queen of the south, imply somewhat more than the mere condemnation of that generation among whom the Son of God then dwelt? Did he not mean to say, that this woman was led by sovereign grace to visit Jerusalem, where she had been taught to believe the Lord's people dwelt? The Scripture at the head of these observations certainly seems to intimate as much, in that it saith, "that when she heard of the fame of Solomon, and when she came to prove him with hard questions, it was because the fame of Solomon was "concerning the name of the Lord." And we certainly do no violence to holy Scripture, in supposing that she might be led by divine influence; and her visit, however unconscious in herself to the cause, was not for the discovery of the natural understanding of the king of Israel in the wisdom of this world; but of his apprehension in divine truths, and

as the Scripture states it, "concerning the name of the Lord." Might there not be the secret workings of the Lord in this woman's heart, for a somewhat which she knew not what, and which none could explain to her; but by which the Lord was leading her, "as the blind, in a way which she knew not; and in places which she had not known, making darkness light before her, and crooked things straight?" (Isaiah xlii. 16.) Nay, might not her case be similar to that of that Æthiopian, which we read of in the after ages of the church, who came to Jerusalem for to worship, and was returning uninformed, and as ignorant of salvation as he came, until the Lord sent a special messenger after him into the wilderness, to preach Christ unto him, and to open his eyes to the knowledge of the Lord? (Acts viii. 26, 39.)

Indeed, do we not behold in both the wonderful confirmation of Scripture, when predicting the glorious æra of the day of the gospel; when "the Gentiles should come to the light of Christ, and kings to the brightness of his rising?" The prophet Isaiah, soaring high in the spiritual apprehension of these things, and under the unction of the Holy Ghost, expressed himself very strikingly to this point, when he said, "Thy sons shall come from far; and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. The multitude of camels shall cover thee; the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come, they shall have gold and incense, and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord." (Isaiah lx. 3, 6). What a very blessed instruction from the Lord is read to the church in those scriptures, when in ages so distant and remote, we behold the divine workings of the Lord in the hearts of his people. The Son of God said, and the truth must be confirmed, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me." (John vi. 37.) They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from

the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." (Luke xiii. 29.)

But may we not add one observation more to the view we have already taken of this sweet Scripture concerning the queen of the south; and without violence to the history, behold in it, spiritually considered, the first outlines of a sinner, when convinced of sin, in his inquiry after the Lord Jesus Christ. If, on this woman's hearing of the fame of Solomon, she resolved to go to him for the discovery of his wisdom, and to prove him with hard questions; what a just, though faint description is this, of one, that having felt the burden of sin, and groaning after deliverance from it, and having heard of Christ, desires to come to Him, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The imagination cannot conceive what passeth in the mind of such an one, when under the impression of a lost, ruined, and undone estate by nature; the first discoveries are made to him of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of salvation in him by grace. And when under the secret workings of the Lord he comes to Christ, as she came to Solomon, "concerning the name of the Lord;" let those who have been so taught of God determine the point for themselves; but certain it is, that in every instance of the soul, who finds an anxiety for futurity; and is dissatisfied in the pursuit of all creature comforts; though in the twilight of the first awakenings of grace, he is unconscious what his wants are, and from what direction the desire within him comes; yet he feels a certain wound in the spirit, a vacuum there, which nothing earthly can fill. And if, in such moments as these, he hears of the Lord Jesus Christ, as this woman did of the fame of Solomon; no distance is thought too remote; no journey too fatiguing to come unto him. And what question so hard to answer, as then appears to the view of an awakened conscience,

how to flee from the wrath to come; and how to escape the terrors with which the imagination is filled, concerning death, judgment and eternity.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart." (1 Kings x. 2.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It is worthy observation, the splendour with which this queen of Sheba visited the monarch of Israel. It is not impossible but that from the natural affection of her own heart, in that innate and inbred pride, which belongs to our whole nature by the fall, though she had heard of Solomon's fame, she might have no small good opinion of herself. For it is said, that she came "to prove him with hard questions." And certainly, if she thought to put to the test the abilities of Solomon, she must have thought herself competent to do so from her own understanding. One thing however is evident from her history. Her visit was not in relation to the general system of monarchs; either to make a treaty for the extension of her own dominions, or for the discovery of his; or to form a mutual guarantee of peace for both. Her single errand, as it is said, was to know if the general report of Solomon's wisdom was correct; and principally on that first of all subjects, "concerning the name of the Lord."

I pause here, to remark the striking nature of that decision of our Lord, in relation to this woman; how her conduct at the last day will arise to the con-

demnation of the men of every generation, who rest in outward things, and pass by the wisdom of Him, so infinitely greater than Solomon. It is astonishing indeed, and would have been for ever a mystery, had it not been explained to us by the word of God; that such is the blinded state of our nature by the fall, it is impossible, unrenewed in mind, and untaught of God, to have any apprehension of that wisdom "which maketh wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. iii. 15.) Hence we find, that persons of this description, in all the ranks and characters of life, whether high or low, rich or poor, content themselves with the mere outside of things; and in an attention to what are called moral virtues, and a profession of religion, vamp up old corrupt nature in this attempted new covering; and unless recovered by sovereign grace from this delusion, live and die in the vanity of their minds, in direct defiance of the Lord's solemn declaration, which saith, that "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John iii. 3.) Alas, if such a creed become admissible, and the mere civilizing mankind, by an outward reformation of a general inoffensiveness of conduct, and with a little form of religion, qualified for heaven; who stood forth more illustrious in the annals of mankind, and had higher pretensions, than the heathens of antiquity? Pagan Rome boasted her heroes of virtue; and the commonwealth of the Lacedæmonian state took pride in the supposed purity of their people's morals. But what the restraints of natural education and the fear of man may produce on the corrupt nature of fallen man, is what our Lord, in his unequalled language, calls "the whitening of sepulchres; which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." (Matt. xxiii. 27.) Scions of mere nature, grafted on a dead stock of nature,

can produce nothing but what partakes of the same nature; and this, as the Scripture states, so it must be: "their root is rottenness; and their blossom shall go up as dust." (Isaiah v. 24.)

But may we not, as in the former view of the queen of the south, consider the subject somewhat spiritually? This woman came to prove Solomon with hard questions "concerning the name of the Lord." And observe how she came. It was with a very great train, and with all the pageantry of a southern princess. And thus, for the most part, until better taught, cometh the natural man to the Almighty Solomon, our Lord Jesus Christ, when coming "to prove him with hard questions." Like a stately vessel, laden with good things, he hath put on board all his stock. He hath, in his own view, done much good in life; a cargo of alms-deeds and charities, for which he promiseth himself a good reception at the heavenly port. And in point of negative duties, like the man we read of in the parable, he can look round upon his neighbours, and measuring himself by the comparative statement he hath made from the stilts, on which he takes the view of himself with him, he saith with him, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are; extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this, or that publican." (Luke xviii. 11.) What less than the sovereign power of God shall be sufficient to take the film off from the eyes so blinded by nature, both to the knowledge of the original and actual sin of that nature. Not all the declarations made in the word of God, of the utterly lost, ruined, and undone estate of man, by nature, can by any physical power carry conviction of such truths to the heart. If all the threatenings of the law, and all the promises of the gospel, were sounded in the ears of mere carnal, unrenewed men, from day to day, in every public

place of oncourse; nothing will persuade to the fear of the one, or the hope of the other. Let both strike for ever on the flinty heart of an unawakened sinner; not a spark will ignite from the reiterated stroke. It is not enough to say, that the natural man *will not;* for the Scripture saith, that the natural man *cannot* receive the things of the Spirit of God; "for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.)

The holy Scripture saith, that when the queen of Sheba arrived at Jerusalem, and had been introduced into the presence of Solomon, "she communed with him of all that was in her heart." I stay not to enquire, what formed the subject of this conference. The history states, that her object of the journey was "to prove the king with hard questions." But we are left to conjecture of what nature those questions were. Yet if it can be supposed that the Lord was leading this woman in a way to the knowledge of himself: the questions which in such circumstances would arise in an awakened mind, cannot be far to discover. Probably she had known and felt, what Solomon himself acknowledged to have felt; and the state and equipage of a court, with all the appendages of royalty, could give no real comfort to the soul. He tells us, that he had "builded houses, and planted vineyards, gardens, and orchards; that he had silver and gold, men servants, and maid servants, singing men, and singing women; and all the delights of the sons of men:" so that he was great and increased in greatness, "more than all that were before him in Jerusalem; that whatsoever his eye desired, he kept not from him." But that when he looked upon all the works that his hands had wrought, "behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit." (Eccles. ii. 1, 11.)

Reader! I pray you pause over this solemn confession, (for it is a most solemn one,) which the greatest monarch that ever wielded the sceptre of the earth, made of himself. The whole world, with all that it contains, is not sufficiently capacious to satisfy the vast desires of an immortal soul. "The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold." (Job xxviii. 14—17.)

Nothing out of Christ can give real, true, solid, and substantial comfort. And this explains to us why it is, that so many aching hearts are in fine houses; and numbers of the great ones of the earth are in misery, in the midst of a fulness of all earthly things. Riches, fame, honour, titles, and all the abundance of creature-possessions, still leave a void in the heart. If man were a camelion, he might, according to the nature of a camelion, live on air. But the soul of man (and it is the soul that must be satisfied,) can find no sustenance in such things. And the day is coming, when the want of Christ will leave the soul of every son and daughter of Adam, that is destitute of him, destitute of all good, and full of all evil. And even now, the Lord hath tinged all creature-comforts with vanity, on purpose to shew, that while in him, the regenerated child of God hath all things richly to enjoy, whatever outward circumstances may be in the lot; yet without him, the possession of empires would be nothing. He is essentially necessary to sweeten all comforts; and he sanctifies all afflictions. Where he is, there can be no real misery; for the cup of adversity with him loseth all its bitterness. Where he is not, it matters not

what there is beside; for "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." So that what the apostle said concerning the church in Christ, ages after this visit of the queen of the south to Solomon, was equally true then and now. And however paradoxical to men of the world; to partakers of grace in Christ, Old Testament saints, as well as New Testament believers, all have found literally fulfilled; "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2 Cor. vi. 10.)

One view more, before we dismiss this part of the subject, may be gathered from it; namely, the freedom this woman found of communing with Solomon "of all that was in her heart." The courts of eastern princes were not always accessible. Esther, though a queen, dared not to enter the king's presence, unless expressly called there by the king himself. One law (we read) there was, "to put to death all the people, whether men or women, who should come unto the king, into the inner court, except such to whom the king should hold out the golden sceptre, that he might live." (Esther iv. 11.)

But when we have extolled the grace and favour of Solomon to the highest pitch, in the admission of this woman to enter into his presence; and "to commune with him of all that was in her heart;" how infinitely short doth the whole appear, in the contemplation of our most glorious Solomon; to whom we are not barely permitted at all times to come, but commanded to "come boldly to his throne of grace, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need." (Heb. iv. 16.)

It is blessed, yea, very blessed, on this subject, to mark one by one the features of our most precious Lord and King. "He waits to be gracious." Waits to hold forth the golden sceptre, for the assurance of our petitions. And if at any time he beholds

any of his redeemed ones backward to approach him; he lets them know, by the communicating influence of his Holy Spirit within them, that he will prevent them, that is, be beforehand with them in the blessings of his goodness. He saith himself, "It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Isaiah lxv. 24.) And who that believes this, would ever be absent from the mercy-seat? Surely we may "commune with him of all that is in our heart." For he knows what passeth there before we tell him. He is intimately acquainted with all the secret circumstances of our lives. "He knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust." And yet more than all this. He enters so minutely into all our concerns, as to make every case and circumstance of his people his own. Yea, he is more interested for our welfare than we are for ourselves. For it is not simply the welfare of our own persons that is to be solely considered as the predisposing cause of his clemency; but his own glory in the happiness of his members. And every truly redeemed and regenerated child of God should everlastingly have this in view. I find it good at all times to do so. It becomes the greatest strengthener to our faith, when, through the sweet manifestation of the Spirit, I can and do assume the language: I will go unto the Lord Jesus, and tell him, "all that is in my heart." Precious Lord! I then say, it is my privilege to come to thee; and it is thy glory to receive me. And surely, O Lord! whilst all the benefit is mine, all the glory is thine: for all blessings are in thee; and thou thyself art most blessed; yea, blessedness, and blessednesses for ever.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not." (1 Kings x. 3.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It cannot be a matter of doubt what was the drift of the queen of the south's question; because, in the former part of her history, we are told that the fame of Solomon, the account of which had reached her in her own land, "was concerning the name of the Lord." And Solomon himself had said, in the prayer which he offered up to the Lord, at the dedication of the temple, that so much would be reported concerning the Lord God of Israel, as to bring foreigners to enquire at Jerusalem after the name of the Lord. "Concerning a stranger, (said Solomon) that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country, for thy name's sake, (for they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm) when he shall come and pray towards this house: hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for." (1 Kings viii. 41—43.)

But if, for the moment, we drop the queen of Sheba's history, and consider it as relative to our own, spiritually, in the state of an awakened soul first coming to Christ for life and salvation, we then trace the subject in a more interesting manner for our profit; and if the unction of the Holy Ghost be upon us, we discover the spiritual instruction it holds forth to the Lord's church and people in all ages. I do this the rather, because it was said by the Son of God himself, concerning the coming of the Holy Ghost to his church and people, that the first manifestations of his grace should be, "to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." And that the same almighty God the Spirit, should take of the things of Christ, and shew unto the people. Hence the first apprehensions on the mind, under

convictions of sin, gives also a desire of deliverance from it; and prompts an inquiry after the person of Christ. And our knowledge of his grace to us, is formed by the manifestation he makes of himself, when, as in the instance of this woman with Solomon, the Lord answers all our questions, and nothing is hid from him of which he tells us not.

We have a beautiful illustration of this under our Lord's own personal ministry, in the case of the woman of Samaria. She had no one thought of Christ, or of her need of Christ, when going to the well, (as the gospel relates) to draw water for the wants of herself and her family; but there meeting with the Saviour of the world, the discoveries of the Lord made to her of herself; then of him; and lastly, of her need of salvation by him; ended in the most complete conviction who Christ was; and of her utterly lost estate without him. The Son of God opened to her view all her heart. He told her, (as Solomon did) this queen of the south, all her questions. And the Lord Jesus made her so thoroughly out of love with herself, and so much in love with him, that it appeared to her there was not any thing in her life hid from Christ which he told her not. And under these impressions, she left her waterpot at the well, and went her way into the city, and said to the men of the place, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" (John iv. 29.)

The spiritual apprehension of these truths, upon true scriptural principles, is of the highest moment to our present and everlasting welfare. For they all centre in the person of Christ. And as a right knowledge of the person of Christ can be the only foundation for a right, perfect, and entire trust in Christ; so where these divine truths are received into the mind, conscience and understanding, they

enable the soul to raise above all other considerations. "All things (saith the apostle, by the Holy Ghost,) are yours, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." (1 Cor. iii. 22.)

And I beg that I may be properly understood on this subject, when I say, that I lay the whole stress of this glorious doctrine on the spiritual and scriptural apprehension of Christ. I mean what my knowledge of Christ is in himself; and not in what I feel concerning Christ: not my personal enjoyment, but what are called experiences; but by what Christ is, whether those feelings and experiences of mine are lively or not. The glorious person of the Lord Jesus Christ and is incommunicable work, never vary. The ocean of his blessedness is at one eternal high water-mark, and flood, which neither ebbs nor flows. And such, therefore, should be, and indeed is, (when it is framed on the ground of Scripture, and spiritually received) our apprehension of Christ. If I express myself, to the reader's knowledge of this foundation truth; and if the Lord be his teacher, he will see, that such precious views of the Lord Jesus Christ, when spiritually received into the mind, and heart, and understanding, and conscience, make one everlasting day of light in the soul. For here is nothing that is fluctuating or changeable; and consequently no darkness or night. The redeemed and regenerated child of God hath one invariable and unceasing object of faith; namely, Christ. And as "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," the spiritual knowledge of him must give an everlasting sameness to the trust in him. Whereas, if I take any thing of self into the account, and my views of this almighty Lord are greater or less, as the frame of my mind may be, I introduce another subject into the view, and render that to my apprehension liable to be more or less permanent, which

in itself is "without variableness, or shadow of turning." To use the language of the Scripture before us, in relation to what passed between this earthly monarch and this woman, the Lord Jesus Christ, our almighty Solomon, "hath told (such believers as I am speaking of) all their questions;" all their inquiries. Having learnt to acquire true spiritual and scriptural apprehensions of the person, and consequently of the incommunicable work of Christ, there is not any thing which passeth in us, which he hath told us not.

And the infinite importance of such fixed and permanent views of Christ, is most truly blessed on another account; namely, because the like precious faith is alike the privilege of the weakest as well as the strongest believer. For it is not the weakness, or the strength of our faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ, that makes the smallest difference in the glorious object of that faith; which is Christ himself. He is always the same; and the glories and triumphs of his incommunicable work of salvation, are always the same. Hence, therefore, the babe in Christ, and the strongest saint in Christ, have one and the same object. For (to glance at what was said before) it is not what we feel, but what Christ is. The faith of Abraham had no other object, however strong the patriarch enjoyed it, than the poor man, who cried out, under the apprehension that his faith was weak, "Lord! I believe, help thou mine unbelief." As if he had said, Lord! thou art the glorious object of my faith; help what of weakness in unbelief is in myself. The drop of dew on the blade of grass is as truly water as the whole ocean. It is part of the same element; of the same quality; however different in quantity. Such is faith, in all its bearings; because the great object of faith is one and the same. Hence Peter, when sending by the Holy Ghost's command, his second epistle to the church,

sent it alike to all the church; "unto them (saith he) that have obtained like precious faith with us;" (2 Pet. i. 1.) like precious to all; because the glorious object is alike precious for all. And Paul, under the same authority, when closing his sermon before the church at Antioch, thus expresseth the same delightful truth: "By him, (that is Christ Jesus) all that believe, (be they weak believers, or strong believers) all are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts xiii. 39.)

If my reader be one, "the eyes of whose understanding (as that apostle speaks elsewhere) are enlightened to know what is the hope of his calling;" he will find a great savour of Christ in what is here said in this scripture, if, in application to what the Lord doth by his people, in telling them all their questions; opening to them what passeth in their hearts; and giving them to see, that he is intimately acquainted both with their persons, and their exercises. And it is much in this way that Jesus manifesteth himself to his people, "otherwise than to the world." For this explains in what the life and grace of communion consists. It begins with the Lord, and terminates in the Lord. The personal knowledge the Lord Jesus hath of all the persons of his people; his love for them, and abidings with them; communications to them, and secret workings in them; these become the source and spring of all the quickenings, and revivings of grace in the hearts of his redeemed; and by which, while Jesus comes to bless, in the renewed visits of his love, their souls are drawn forth in adoration, delight, and praise. And it is a most rich and costly feast, when at any time the Lord thus leads his hidden ones, as he did the spouse of old, to his "banquetting house, and spreads his banner over them of love." (Song ii. 4.) For as Jesus

himself said, and every regenerated child of God is supposed personally, more or less, to know; when he comes, the Father also comes, and "make their abode:" and no less the Holy Ghost the Comforter, "who abides with them for ever." (John xiv. 16, 23.) And as the special, and personal act of God the Spirit, is to reveal the love of God the Father, and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the soul; this most blessedly proves both his person, GODHEAD, and ministry; in that he "directs the heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." (2 Thess. iii. 5.) So that this is the sweetest of all love-feasts, and the highest and best of all experiences, when the Holy Ghost thus "takes of the things of Christ, and sheweth unto his people." By thus shedding abroad the love of the one, and directing into the patient waiting for the other, the child of God receives a personal testimony in his own conscience, of the persons of the holy Three in One in the GODHEAD; and can and doth "set to his seal that God is true." (John iii. 33.) Very blessed it is when our Almighty Solomon thus doth by his people, as the eastern king did by the princes of the south; "tell all our questions; and lets nothing which is for our spiritual comfort remain hid, which he tells us not.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built,

"And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her.

"And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom.

"Howbeit, I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes hath seen it; and, behold, the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard." (1 Kings. x. 4—7.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

In pondering this part of the interview between those personages, I do not think it necessary to dwell long on the several particulars the queen of the south was struck with, respecting the order of Solomon's house. She observed much wisdom in the arrangement and government of the whole; and was not a little affected at what she saw. His buildings, his furniture, the meat of his table, the regularity of his servants, the service of his ministers, and their apparel; all which, differed no doubt, not only in splendour, but in decorum, from what she had ever seen before. But though it is not said, that the ascent of the king, "when he went up to the house of the Lord," struck her yet more forcibly than the rest; yet, as it is last mentioned in this relation; and as in some of the old versions the words are read, "that when she saw the burnt offerings which Solomon offered in the house of the Lord;" here was the great cause which wrought such an effect on her mind; so that "there was no more spirit in her."

I would ask the question, (but not venture to decide upon it,) might not this fainting of soul arise from the view of the solemn service of the temple, and yet more strikingly from the sacrifices, which shadowed forth Christ? Could it be supposed that the writer or reader of these observations had seen the same; conscious of the sin of our nature, and beholding the shedding of the blood of the sacrifice, or the burnt offering in the temple; and yet as ignorant as the queen of the south, of the person and glory of Christ; would not a spirit of fainting like her's have

followed? For however like her at that time, incapable of forming any affinity between the sin of man, and the slaughter of a beast; yet the view must have been overwhelming! Oh, what a ray of the most sovereign and beneficial light hath "the glorious gospel of the ever blessed God," poured in upon the dark estate of our fallen nature! Well might this poor woman acknowledge the truth of the report she had heard in her own country of Israel, and of Israel's king! And truly might she, without blushing, confess of her unbelief before she came; when now, under the conviction that it far exceeded all that had been said, she most freely and cheerfully gave testimony to the same. "Behold, (said she to Solomon) the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard."

But here, as before, let us leave the contemplation, both of the eastern and southern monarchs, with all the pomp and pageantry of creatures of a day, to look unto Him, "who is, and was, and is to come;" the eternal and everlasting Lord of heaven and earth!—Who that beholds the order of the Lord's house; his ordinances, and means of grace; the church, which he hath purchased with his most precious blood; the bread of life, and the water of life, which is himself, and which are received and lived upon by his redeemed ones, at his sacramental supper; the apparel of his servants; the order of his ministry, whom he hath "made kings and priests unto God and the Father:" who that beholds these things, and through sovereign and almighty grace knows himself to be the object and subject of divine favour, and interested personally himself in them; and is in the full assurance of being a partaker of these unspeakable mercies in Christ, but must faint in the contemplation, and find himself overwhelmed, like the queen of the south, "who had no spirit left in her?"

Yea, to go further, and through the perspective of the gospel, to look into futurity, and contemplate the glory which shall be revealed. What will be the astonishment then, when the whole of the present time-state being over, and the church now below shall have joined the church triumphant, which is above; when the Son of God shall come "to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe!" What fainting of soul, in holy joy and rapture undescribable, will be the sight of that heavenly court, when our Almighty Solomon shall be seen, surrounded with his whole redeemed family; "when every knee shall bow before him, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!"

But in the mean time, how astonishing are all the views which are proposed to faith, in relation to the marvellous events involved in those discoveries. When Solomon had finished the temple, the astonishment of all the then known world which beheld it; and when the monarch looked at the structure, magnificent and splendid as it was; yet considering the infinite glory of that "high and loftly One, whose name is Holy," to whom it was dedicated, and for whose service it had been erected; contemplating the infinite disproportion between the house, and the Lord of it, he cried out: "But will God, indeed, dwell on the earth?—Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings viii. 27.)

But what would this greatest, and wisest of all earthly princes have said, had he lived in the days of Christ; and had he seen God himself, in the person of his Son, tabernacling in substance of our flesh, and living, and dwelling among us? What faintings of spirit would that have been, when lost in the contemplation of "the mystery of godliness," he had seen

his glory; "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!" What learning and reasonings of men and angels, untaught of God, could have been given Solomon, for him to have apprehended the wonderful subject? Surely, after millions of ages had passed in the wisest schools of nature; and all the universities of human and angelic learning; all creature wisdom must have failed to have formed the smallest apprehension of "God manifest in the flesh."

Yea, and to go further in the vast subject. What line of any intellect, saving that of God, could have fathomed the infinitude of divine wisdom, in relation to the way in which Jehovah, in his trinity of Persons, would accomplish the salvation of his people? Had Solomon been told what the gospel hath told us, yea, and through grace, brought the redeemed and regenerated church of God to believe and trust in; that one of the holy persons in the GODHEAD should not only become man, but in the double nature of God and man in one person, should become the Saviour of his chosen! That though in himself so spotless, no iniquity could approach him, in whose sight the heavens are not clean; and "his angels he chargeth with folly:" (Job iv. 18.) yet was made sin, and a curse for us, though he knew no sin, that "we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21. Gal. iii. 13.) Had Solomon, or had any of the saints of God, under the Old Testament age, who, like Abraham, "saw the day of Christ afar off, and rejoiced and was glad;" (John viii. 56, 57.) been led into the spiritual apprehension of the astonishing process, by which redemption-work was to be accomplished; how, like the queen of the south, would they have listened to the heavenly tale, until, like her, they had swooned away, "and had no more spirit in them."

And yet so plain are those most glorious truths, with all others that are connected with them, to the spiritual apprehension of every redeemed and regenerated child of God; now revealed as they are at large in the gospel, and revealed unto us by the Spirit; that like the prophet's vision, "he that runs may read them." (Hab. ii. 2.) And as if at the same time to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, while the weakest and humblest of the sons of men, when taught of God, are made wise unto salvation; and can, and do, enter into a scriptural and spiritual apprehension of the mysteries of godliness; and live by faith upon them; and live up to the enjoyment of them; the wisdom of this world is wholly incompetent to the discovery. Hence the Holy Ghost, by his servant the apostle Paul, draws the line of everlasting distinction between the world of carnal understanding, and the people "that dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the nations." (Numb. xxiii. 9.) "We speak (saith Paul) the wisdom of God in a mystery;" that is, not only of a mystery do we speak, but we speak it still in a mystery; and ever must be a mystery to all that are untaught of God. For, adds the apostle, it is "even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world, unto our glory." Now, observe also, what follows: "Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Now observe again. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man, which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man,

but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world; but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." (1 Cor. ii. 7, &c.)

And to add no more in confirmation of this unquestionable truth: we find our adorable Lord himself making it the subject of thanksgiving to the Father, for his distinguishing grace to his chosen, on this ground: and at a time when his disciples had returned from preaching the kingdom, and were relating to him with joy of their success. Yea, the account is prefixed with an observation, which we no where meet with, but upon this occasion; namely, Christ's rejoicing in spirit. "In that hour, Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said: I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid the things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." (Luke x. 21.)

And who, among the Lord's scholars, brought into his school; but in the contemplation of the distinguishing mercy, will lose sight of Solomon's court and all that passed between him and the queen of the south; and cry out with the apostle:—"O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. xi. 33.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.

"Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighteth in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice." (1 Kings x. 8, 9.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The first idea which arose in the mind of the queen of Sheba, after she had recovered from her swoon, was the consideration of the happiness of such a court and kingdom as Solomon's; when, from the highest to the lowest, all were brought under the auspices of his wise and beneficent government; and above all, both king and people, blessed with the ordinances of worship to serve the Lord. And under these impressions, she could not refrain from acknowledging the special advantages they possessed. Beginning, therefore, her praises with the lower order, in the nation at large, she ascended to the higher, in the still greater privileges of his servants at his court, who were brought nearer to his person; and then, by a climax, still infinitely higher, running up the whole to the source and origin of all; she blessed God as the Almighty Giver: "Happy the people; happy the servants, who stand continually before thee; and blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel." And no doubt, the view of such a court and people must have commanded respect to the eye of every beholder. Neither is it possible for the imagination to conceive a sight more lovely, than that of a wise and just government, in any and every nation, where from the king to the beggar, each in his several station and character, is endeavouring to promote the general welfare and happiness of the whole, and of one another.

But when, from the kingdom and court of Solomon, king of Israel, our contemplation is directed to him, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and to the church in him; how lost to view, and insignificant to all concern, is every earthly consideration in the prospect. "Happy indeed are the men, (may we

well say with the Psalmist) happy the servants that are in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." If we ascend, as the queen of the south did, in this sublime subject, from the lower to the higher departments, every object which presents itself before us, ariseth more transcendently glorious, and becomes most endearing. The church of Christ, taken in one great whole, overwhelms the mind in the contemplation. Even from the mouth of an enemy, confession is exhorted to this amount; as we find in the instance of Balaam. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." (Numb. xxiv. 5, 9.)

And when from the church at large, we look, as the queen of the south did, more particularly to the servants of the Lord's house; we may well adopt similar language to her's; and say concerning them unto the Lord, "Happy are the men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom." There is an unction, a savour of Christ, upon the whole body of Christ's church; and in the solemn services of spiritual ordinances; which (as the spouse said) "is as ointment poured forth." (Song i. 3.) But the servants of Christ, who, by the ordination of God the Holy Ghost, minister in holy things, have a special grace for that ministry towards others, while the Lord makes his favour personally blessed to themselves. Hence, in that beautiful Psalm, where the Levites were particularly called upon for their immediate employment in the temple service to praise God; the words are most expressive to this end: "Behold, now, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night

stand in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord." (Ps. cxxxiv.) And if the Old Testament saints were thus called upon to unceasing praises, who only ministered in the shadow of good things to come; what may be supposed ought to be the high sounding praises to our God, of those who are called to the sacred office, and to the ministry of the word, now in the substance? Surely, the church of our most glorious Christ, in the present day, both ministers and people, may well blush, and take shame, if when at any time, reading the animated strains which flowed from the lips and hearts of those saints of God; we catch not an holy flame to warm our frozen affections, in aspiring after the same melody of soul. An employment so divine, so spiritual; living under the quickenings and renewings of the Holy Ghost; receiving manifestations from Christ, and the Father in Christ: the daily, hourly, visits of the holy Three in One, and the personal knowledge of, and communion with, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, cannot but induce a corresponding affection of soul. And when the Lord the Spirit makes a gracious revelation of the love of each glorious person in the Godhead to the soul; and at the same time draws out the lively actings of the soul, in a way of spiritual apprehension of the divine presence; then the glow of affection will burst from the heart, and the language will be like that of the apostle: "Unto God, only wise, be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

But while meditating on the blessedness of the church, both in her ministers and people; when we advance to the contemplation of the glorious Head of the church, in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" we are not simply overwhelmed as

the queen of the south was at the presence of Solomon; but like John, the beloved apostle, "we fall at his feet as dead." Spiritual apprehensions of Christ, even in the moment the Lord is blessing his people with them, lay them low in the dust before him; and while they rejoice in the view of his glory, they sink to the earth under a conscious sense of their own creatureship and sinfulness. "Woe is me! (said the prophet) for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." But what answer did he receive? "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." (Isaiah vi. 5, 7.) Such a spiritual sense and apprehension of the person, and transcendent excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ, who "is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," surpasseth all description. What he is in himself, in his essential and underived glory, as "One with the Father, over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." What he is, in his compound nature, God and man in one: what he is in his mediatorial glory, having "finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righ teousness:" what he is "for his people; and what he is to his people;" filling all relations, being Head and husband, father, brother, friend; the mind of man is not competent to grasp such an infinity of object, and subject; and can only express adoration, love, and praise, in language like the church of old:— "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory." Amen and Amen. (Psalm lxxi. 18, 19.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones; there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon.

"And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country." (1 Kings x. 10, 13.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The close of this beautiful memoir of the queen of Sheba visiting Solomon, ends, as it began, in furnishing subject of continual instruction to man, and everlasting praise to God. Spiritually considered, it is not the least instructive part of the history, in the barter made between these princes of the earth; in the giving and receiving from each other tokens of regard. She gave Solomon her choicest gifts. And he gave her (it is said) all her desire; "beside that which he gave her of his royal bounty." And is there not a mutual exchange between our most glorious Solomon, the Lord Jesus Christ; and our redeemed and regenerated souls? For though we have, indeed, nothing of our own to offer, and of his own, whatever the Lord enables us to bring, it is what we have first received from him, and that we return to him again; yet the bare acknowledgment of our nothingness, and his all-sufficiency, is considered by the Lord as the best boon, in the humble and contrite heart; which God hath said, he "will not despise." And, when under the unction of the Holy Ghost, we thus approach a throne of grace, it is our mercy when we come to him empty, to return full; to exchange our weakness for his strength; our ignorance for his wisdom; our uncleanness for his holiness; and our poverty for

his riches. And when the Lord doth by us, as Solomon did by the queen of the south; not only grant all that our spiritual desires can suggest; but over and above all that we can ask or think, and which he sees proper for us, "of his own royal bounty;" Oh! the unspeakable blessedness of knowing, that "He is made of God to us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Cor. i. 30, 31.)

Before we finally leave the subject, it will be our wisdom to attend, once more, to what the Lord Jesus Christ said in relation to this woman arising at the last day, to condemn the conduct of the men of that generation; who, when the Son of God himself was the preacher, manifested a fastidious contempt both to his person and doctrine; and stopped not so much as to hear "the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." And what an accumulation of reproach, and everlasting condemnation, must finally overtake the Christ despisers of the present, as well as the past age, since Christ's days; yea, and every following generation yet to come; who refuse both Him that then spake on earth, and is now speaking, by his Holy Spirit, from heaven!

The Lord give (if it be his blessed will) grace both to him that writes, and to him that reads the history of this woman, with our Lord's own appprobation of her conduct; that prompted by her example, we may delight to attend the courts of the Lord's house, and "the place where his honour dwelleth:" and under every means of grace of the Lord's own appointment, remember his words: "that a greater than Solomon is there." For my own part, I desire to exercise a continual jealousy over my own heart in this particular; and not only in means of grace, but in providences also; in short, in any thing, and in every

thing in gospel truths, to be on the look out for Jesus; and to consider all but a vacuum, and emptiness, where he is not. For unless Jesus be in the most innocent of our earthly comforts, there can be no real enjoyment in them. And where he is not, happiness is not. His person is essential to make that blessed which is called so; but which, without them, wants the real sweetness of all. Very blessedly he saith himself, "Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches, and righteousness. That I may cause them that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures." (Prov. iii. 18, 21.) And if the reader hath found his blessedness, and is himself satisfied with our most glorious Christ, as the queen of the south was with Solomon, in returning as she did, with her servants to her own country; let him, as he riseth up from the view of Christ, speak of his worth; made known his name; proclaim his salvation among the people; and as the Scripture beautifully expresseth it: "Let the fathers to the children make known his truth." (Isaiah xxxviii. 19.)

# PETER AND JOHN

# HEALING THE CRIPPLE

AT THE

# GATE OF THE TEMPLE.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

"And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

"Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms." (Acts iii. 1—3.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

THERE is somewhat particularly striking in the opening of this Scripture history; I mean, in relation both to the place, and time, in which this miracle of the cripple being healed was wrought. The Holy Ghost hath been pleased to have it thus recorded; and it will be our wisdom humbly to follow his footsteps in an enquiry into the cause.

In respect to the *place*, the gate of the temple; there is much significance in it. Where should the helpless, under the crippled state of our fallen nature, be lain, but in the way of ordinances? In the memoirs of our adorable Lord, in the days of his flesh, we read that such was the earnestness of the people for healing, when they saw the miracles

that Jesus did, "they began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. And wheresoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him, that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment; and as many as touched him were made whole." (Mark vi. 55, 56.) What a most beautiful view, (by the way it may be observed,) is here given of our most glorious Lord!

In respect to the *time;* this is not less significant. It was the "hour of prayer, being the ninth hour." The Jews were accustomed to count the twelve hours of the day; beginning from six in the morning, to six at night. Hence, the *ninth hour* corresponded to our *three o'clock* in the afternoon. And this was the ever-memorable, and never-to-be-forgotten hour, when the Son of God in our nature, having hung six hours on the cross, from the third hour (namely, nine o'clock in the morning, to three in the afternoon) to the ninth; then with a loud voice, that all in heaven, and earth, and hell, might hear, cried out, "It is finished. And he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." (John xix. 30.)

I pause to admire the wonderful expression of our Lord.—What was finished? Redemption-work was finished. All the types and shadows of the law were finished. The substance being come, the shadow fled away. Every sacrifice and offering, from the first of Abel, in the garden of Eden, through the whole of the dispensation under the law, to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, were now no longer useful. They had all ministered to this one purpose; and now for ever ceased. Christ, by that "one offering of himself, once offered, hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. iv.) Hence, therefore, we in some measure discover why the Holy Ghost hath so particularized the hour of the

apostle's going up to the temple at the hour of prayer; "being the ninth hour." This was the hour appointed all along, through the whole temple-service, as the hour of the evening sacrifice. And although these offerings were but shadowy representations of the glorious thing signified; yet the Holy Ghost would have them all expressly observed in the same hour. Hence we read, that Daniel, when favoured with that sublime vision concerning Christ's coming, it was "at the time of the evening oblation." (Dan. ix. 24.) Hence Zacharias was engaged in the temple-service at the time of the vision, delivered to him concerning also Christ. (Compare Luke i. 9. with Exod. iii 7, 8.)

And if I pause one moment longer over the view of this *ninth hour*, which God the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to mark with so much emphasis; it shall only be to observe, that as there seems to have been such a blessed coincidence in the healing of this cripple at the gate of the temple, solely by the adorable name of Christ, at the self-same hour as Christ, by his death on the cross, had founded the means of salvation to his chosen ones; it merits the closest attention of all the Lord's people to look at it very specially in this view. And I venture to observe yet further; that the redeemed and regenerated child of God, would find much sweetness of the savour of the Lord Jesus Christ on his soul, as often as at this *ninth hour* the Holy Ghost, the Remembrancer of Christ, brought to his recollection the wondrous event. For to realize spiritually in the mind and conscience, and understanding, the person of Christ, and the work of Christ; and as the apostle expresseth it, "to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings;" this is the very life of the soul; and which tendeth to raise the soul to the very suburbs of

heaven. For that child of God thereby proves his adoption; and as such, doth to all intents and purposes partake in the same. It were therefore an object of attainment, much to be desired, under the divine unction; though the privilege doth not seem, even by the Lord's people, to be sufficiently known; or at least, not so generally brought into daily enjoyment, as the infinite preciousness of it should seem to recommend.

The history begins in that plain simple manner of narrative, which forms a prominent feature of distinction to mark the word of God. "A certain man lame from his mother's womb." And may we not, without violence to the subject, consider this *certain man*, a cripple from the womb, an apt representation of any man, and every man, who, from the Adam-fall transgression, are all alike crippled in our faculties, both of body and mind; yea, more than crippled; being spiritually "dead in trespasses and sins?" (Eph. ii. 1.) It is said in the following chapter, (verse 22.) that he was "above forty years old," at the time this miracle of healing was shewn him. So that though, very probably, for many a year; and perhaps nearly from his birth, he had been laid daily at the gate of the temple, to get alms; yet however conscious of the lameness of his body, there had never been, to this hour, when the apostles first saw him, any consciousness of the dead estate of his soul; and consequently, no desire, or even the knowledge of the needs-be of salvation.

This view of the subject will be sensibly felt, and indeed so felt, as to become an heart-melting subject to every redeemed and regenerated child of God. Where was I, (will form a question, more or less, arising in the breast,) when the Lord passed by, and called me by his grace? Not, perhaps, like this cripple, even at the gate of the temple; but far remote

from the house of God, or from the desire of the love of God; "but living without God, and without Christ in the world." What a beautiful illustration of God's preventing and sovereign grace hath the Lord himself given of this subject, by one of his prophets. Under the similitude of an infant just born, and cast out to perish, the Lord, the Holy Ghost, represents the shadowy description of our fallen nature, left in spiritual deadness and death, when the Lord passed by and bid us live. "In the day that thou wast born, none eye pitied thee, to have compassion upon thee, but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was a time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." (Ezekiel xvi. 4—8.)

It is most blessed when we are spiritually made alive, and brought to see somewhat of our mercies; to look back, and behold how the Lord first made known to us the riches of his grace; where we were engaged; and in what state the Lord found us; and what a time of love that was in the Lord; when with us, our time was the deepest misery! Let not the reader pass away from the subject until that he hath first made it somewhat personal. Such lookings back, when once the Lord hath brought us by sovereign grace to be looking forward in a well-grounded hope in Christ, not only ministers to humble the soul, and to exalt and endear Christ; but also, it tends to comfort and encourage the child of God against all the exercises which he may be yet called unto. For if

the Lord passed by and called me by his grace, when I thought not of him; surely the Lord will not suffer me to perish, when he hath enabled me to place my whole confidence in him? *Then*, there was nothing further from my thoughts than the Lord. *Now*, amidst all my unworthiness, truly, in the worst of times, I can and do say, "Whom have I in heaven, or in earth, I desire beside thee?" And if, as the Holy Ghost hath said by Paul, "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." (Rom. v.)

But to return to the history of the cripple. He is first represented while laying impotent at the gate of the temple, as seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, and as asking an alms. Poor man! The temple, and the temple-service, at that time, were nothing to him; only as opportunity was thereby the better afforded him for craving supplies for the body: the salvation of his soul was not in his account. And although at the time of this transaction, the wonderful event which had just before taken place, of the descent of the Holy Ghost, and of his miraculous gift of tongues to the apostles, must have come within his knowledge, in the report of which he could not have been ignorant, yet the whole affected him not! The bread that perisheth with using, bounded his desires; a total unconcern for the bread that endureth to everlasting life, marked his conduct. And who doth not behold in this event, an emblem of human nature, universally so, while unawakened, unregenerated, and uncalled, by sovereign grace? What troops of these are found in every street, and place of public concourse; mendicants for the body, but regardless of the soul; anxious for the casket, but regardless of the jewel; wise for the moment, but lost to all concern for eternity.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us.

"And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them." (Acts iii. 4, 5.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I BEG the reader to observe with me, the particularity of expression;—"Peter fastening his eyes upon him, with John."—And was there not, (I do not speak decidedly) somewhat more than the mere impulse of nature, in this attention to the poor man? Let it be recollected, the special season when this miracle was wrought; namely, immediately after the descent of the Holy Ghost. The Son of God had said before his departure, that when the Holy Ghost was come, these signs should follow them that believed. "In my name (said Jesus) shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark xvi. 17, 18.) Here then the Lord began the display of his Almighty sovereignty in this first miracle, when the day of Pentecost was passed, in the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Moreover, as a further confirmation of this particularity of expression, in the apostles' fastening their eyes on the man; I beg to call the reader's attention to a similar miracle wrought by the instrumentality of the apostle Paul, at Lystra, as we read Acts xiv. 8, &c. This man at Lystra, as the man at Jerusalem, never had walked. But the fastening of the eyes of Paul on the cripple at Lystra, is accompanied with this further account: "that the same heard Paul speak, who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiv-

ing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked. Will it not be acknowledged that the cases were similar? Surely, Peter and John's fastening their eyes on the one; and Paul steadfastly beholding the other, are of the same signification. Neither is it the smallest consideration in the account, that as in the instance of the man at Lystra, the apostle, it is said, "perceived that he had faith to be healed:" evidently here, the Lord himself had prepared the man's heart by grace, for the salvation of the soul, before that the cure was wrought for the healing of the body: and in both instances, we find the miracle is followed in giving praises to God. I cannot forbear also adding another observation: that as in this case at Jerusalem, the apostles Peter and John wrought the first miracle among the Jews; so this was the first with the apostles, Paul and Barnabas, which began their ministry among the Gentiles. Very blessed confirmation, that the Lord hath brought both Jew and Gentile into one fold, one church, in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

I shall not enlarge on this part of the history. But I cannot go on, until that I have first remarked what is said in this Scripture. The apostles looking to the poor cripple; and the cripple looking unto the apostles. Very different, however, were their views and feelings on this occasion. The cripple heeded only the alm; the apostles beheld him as the object of greater grace. He expected nothing but money; they wished to make known to him the riches of divine love. His desires went no further than the supply of the wants of the body; they had an eye to the salvation of his soul. The poor cripple knew of nothing, but of the bread that perisheth with using; the apostles longed to impart to him a knowledge of the bread that endureth to everlasting life.

What a world of mystery is contained in this marvellous subject! Every reader, who is himself a partaker of grace, will enter into a spiritual apprehension of somewhat beyond what we read in the mere history; but the whole blessedness, in the salvation wrapt up in it, remains for eternity to explain!

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

"And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ancle bones received strength.

"And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

"And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

"And they knew that this was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him." (Acts iii. 6--10.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

So many, and so rich a clustre of precious fruit, hang in delightful view, and to our reach, on the luxuriant boughs of this holy Scripture, that I would beg the reader to gather them one by one; and looking to the Lord for the spiritual enjoyment of them, see whether, (as the spouse speaks) our Beloved is not unto us as unto her, "a clustre of camphire, in the vineyards of Engedi." (Song i. 14.)

And *first*:—Let us look to the Lord, that "his fruit may be sweet to our taste," in beholding the rich triumphs of grace in the minds of the apostles, rising above all the contemptible things of time and sense; when, from the midst of poverty, Peter could, and did proclaim his total indifference to the pos-

session of every earthly good. Let any man figure to himself those poor fishermen of Galilee, thus speaking out their very heart, in sovereign contempt of all that the world holds dear; and what the whole world of carnal men are everlastingly running after, and accounting their chief good; and let him say, was ever the rich of this world put more to the blush, and the pride and opulence of the great ones more dreadfully mortified, than when, from the mouth of this humble follower of Christ, we hear him say, in a triumph of joy, to the poor cripple, "Silver and gold have I none." And what hadst thou then, Peter, for this beggar? Wherefore, with an empty pocket, like himself, didst thou bid him look unto thee? Did the apostles indeed know, that though themselves in worldly circumstances as pennyless as the mendicant, yet from the Lord they possessed that which empires cannot purchase?

Pause, reader!—Is it only then in the possession of grace, whereby the Lord's people acquire an indifferency to the mere accommodation of nature? Is this the cause which enables a man to raise above the temptation of riches, and to be in no danger of falling into the vortex, in which the whole world of carnal men, like "Korah and his company, are swallowed?" (Numbers xvi. 32.) Here then, the secret is at once explained, why so many are most miserable; whom, if riches had the power to give content, we should think most happy; and who, like their cup, is running over with what are called the good things of this life, are totally empty, and void of all comfort. While on the other hand the partaker of grace, be his lot cast ever so humble and low, hath a sweetener to every providence. He is in no danger of being captivated with the imaginary distinctions of men and things. These are to him but as the rattles and toys of children. Having Christ for his portion, in him

he hath a Benjamin's portion; and when like Peter he can say, "Silver and gold have I none;" yet like Peter, he hath that which ever hath been, and ever will be, a riddle to all wordly men; "as poor, yet making many rich: as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2 Cor. vi. 10.)

The reader will have made a very profitable pause over the view of this subject, if therefrom, under divine teaching, he should have learnt that nothing short of spiritual blessings can give real comfort to the soul. That rich fool our Lord speaks of in the gospel, was a double fool; who proposed to pull down his barns, to build greater, in order to lay up store for the soul. (Luke xvi.) Alas! what can the soul or spirit feed upon, but what is spiritual? The great enemy of souls, who is himself a spirit, and a malignant one indeed, begrudges nothing to the children of men, but the possession of spiritual blessings. A plenty of this world's good, is the sop of Satan to deceive the carnal. He hath gew-gaws suited to the worldly tastes of all worldly men: and to the possession of which he makes no opposition. But when God gives spiritual gifts to his people, all hell is up in arms. From hence we learn the distinguishing nature of spiritual blessings, and the infinite importance of that prayer which the Holy Ghost put into the mouth and heart of the apostle, to ask for the church; namely, to bless the church "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ." (Eph. i. 3.)

The next sweet fruit to be gathered from this rich cluster hanging before us, and within our reach, is the blessed work that followed the apostle's words: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up; and immediately

his feet and ancle bones received strength." (Acts iii. 6, 7.)

Let the reader figure to his imagination a scene like this (for words are unequal to represent it;) let him behold on one side, the animation of the apostles, glowing under the consciousness of the divine influence communicated to them; let him behold on the other hand, the cripple feeling a strength imparted to his benumbed limbs, which never had moved before; and let the reader, while contemplating the miraculous cure thus wrought in the twinkling of an eye, trace the whole to its source, and conceive, if it be possible, what must be the infinite glory and sovereignty of this Almighty person, called by the apostles, "Jesus Christ of Nazareth!" Can all the annals of mankind furnish such an history? Was it ever known, from the creation of the world, of such an event produced by a word speaking? And yet acts of the same nature were so frequent and so familiar by the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his apostles through his name, that they meet us continually in every page, more or less, as we pass over those divine records. "Æneas, (said Peter to the poor man at Lydda, which had kept his bed eight years,) Jesus Christ maketh thee whole. Arise, and make thy bed; and he arose immediately. Tabitha, (said the same apostle to one that was dead, and whom when they had washed, they had laid her by, in an upper chamber for interment,) Tabitha, (said Peter) arise! And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And when he had given her his hand and lifted her up, he called the saints and widows, and presented her alive." (Acts ix. 32—42.) In like manner, Paul said to the impotent man at Lystra, who never had walked, "Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked." (Acts xiv. 8.) And the same apostle in the ship-

wreck, (as recorded Acts xxvii. 34.) declared to those with him on board, "there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you." For the Lord had not only told Paul of his safety; but had given all them that sailed with him. "And so it came to pass, that all that were in the ship, namely, two hundred threescore and sixteen souls, all escaped safe to land." And these, and the like events, were all in perfect correspondence to what the Son of God hath said should follow the belief in his name, when the Holy Ghost had descended, after Christ had ascended. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, (said the Lord Jesus in his divine discourse, just before his sufferings and death,) he that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do; that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." (John xiv. 12—14.)

But we stop at the mere surface of the subject, (very blessed as it is, in this point of view only,) if we look no deeper than to the miracles wrought on the body. The Lord Jesus, by this promise, evidently referred to the display of the still greater acts of grace on the souls of the Lord's people. The Holy Ghost is express to teach, that all the acts of mercy shewn to the body, are designed but as so many testimonies to the word of salvation, which the servants of the Lord preached to the soul. They went forth (it is said) "preaching every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Amen. (Mark xvi. 20.)

And marvellous indeed as it is to read of those astonishing events, when at the word of sinners like ourselves, in the name of our most glorious Christ, cripples in nature, were instantly healed; the organs

of vision restored to the blind, the dead raised, and the like: yet, what were all these in the whole department of nature, compared to the wonders wrought by their instrumentality in the world of grace? What a subject of wonder when we behold the gospel delivered by those fishermen of Galilee; the powerful effects in what the Holy Ghost is pleased to call, "the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. i. 21.) Had you and I been present when the walls of Jericho fell down at the blasting of the ram's horns; or had we beheld the prophet, trusting the whole of his cause to God, in the Lord's answering him by fire, to consume the sacrifice; or had we seen Elijah casting his mantle on Elisha, and beheld the effect which followed in the spirit of Elijah resting on Elisha; in all these events, we must have been convinced that somewhat more than mere natural powers accompanied those outward acts. But when we see not merely walls to fall to the ground, or fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice; and one prophet taking up the mantle of another prophet; but God himself coming down in the Spirit, to remove the mountains of sin in our nature, and to form the heart anew, from stone to flesh in Christ Jesus; here is a miracle of miracles: and which makes the heart of every child of God, who is the happy partaker of it, to cry out, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." (Rev. xv. 3.)

As the illustration of this subject will be the highest and best improvement in our view of the healing of the cripple at the gate of the temple, in that part of it we have already looked at; I shall beg to detain the reader with one or two observations, before we prosecute the remainder of this man's history; in calling his attention to some few of

the distinguishing properties, which the holy word of God hath graciously proposed on this most important doctrine to our attention; and which I pray the Lord to render profitable to our hearts.

I begin with observing the infinite nature of the work itself; which is classed in the word of God in an higher department than all the works of nature. When the apostle Paul had attained to no small apprehension of divine things, from many a year's acquaintance with the plague of his own heart, and the distinguishing love-tokens of grace towards him; he offers a prayer for the church, as the greatest blessing for them to obtain in a life of faith. "I cease not (said he to the church,) to make mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." And then, among other blessings which he then implores for them, he adds this, as eminently great; that "ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power, to usward who believe." Observe, to "usward, who believe;" intimating the rarity of the knowledge. Not only supernatural, and above all possible acquirement, from the study of nature and reason; but especially only discoverable to the Lord's people. (Coloss. i. 26.) And it is well worthy the observation yet further: that the Holy Ghost, by Paul, classeth it among the great mysteries of godliness. "Without all controversy, great is the mystery of godliness." Then, he enumerates the several particulars. He begins with that dazzling mystery, "God manifest in the flesh" Next is added, that world of wonders also, "justified in the spirit." As if the Son of God, in our nature, needed this seal of the Holy Ghost, when having accomplished the salvation of his people. Then follows a third mystery; namely, "seen of angels." Yes!

For the Son of God, as God is, and hath been, and everlastingly must be, as invisible to angels, as to men; from the incomprehensibility of his essence and being. It was only by the assumption of our nature, into union with the GODHEAD, that he became visible or tangible. And hence, angels never beheld God, but in Christ. The next chapter in this last volume of mystery, mentioned in this Scripture is, "preached to the Gentiles." And this to the nation of the Jews, was truly marvellous indeed. And lastly, and which is the one for which I now particularly adverted to this passage of Scripture; "believed on in the world." You see, though last, yet is it enumerated among the cluster of the mysteries of redemption. And though it is revealed to us by the Spirit; yet is it in its nature above the comprehension of angels. "What is the exceeding greatness of his power, to usward who believe?" All the schools upon earth, and all the universities in the creation, can never answer it. And next to the greatest wonder ever wrought in our world, namely, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead; and which called forth in the accomplishment of it, the joint agency of Jehovah in his trinity of Persons; (Heb. xiii. 20. Rom. i. 4. Rom. viii. 11.) the resurrection of every sinner, "dead in trespasses and sins;" and bringing him to "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to the salvation of his soul, is the greatest." (1 Pet. i. 21.) The infinite nature of the work itself, therefore, in inducing faith in the heart, manifests the vast importance of it. The cripple at the gate of the temple was helpless in body; but the crippled sinner, is not only helpless and hopeless in soul, as he is in himself, but spiritually "dead in trespasses and sins." And none but God can raise the dead. And indeed the quickening of every sinner, of the Adam-fall race, requires, and hath the co-

operation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. (See those Scriptures in proof: John vi. 44. John v. 21. John v. 20. Eph. ii. 1. John xvi. 9.)

But we must not stop here. For a *second* view of the infinite nature of the work, ariseth, not only from the total inability in man to accomplish it, but also from the total aversion there is in every man to its accomplishment; arising from the natural Atheism, and from the natural hatred there is to God in his own heart. So that it is not enough to say, that a man cannot, by all the efforts of his own mind, contribute to his own salvation; but the Scriptures go further, and most decidedly prove, that man by the fall, is necessarily in a state of enmity to God; and cannot, by all the arguments of mere reason, be unhinged from this aversion, or brought to hang his hope wholly upon the person and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. viii. 7, 8.)

Now this far exceeds any, and every disease of the body. The crippled state of the man, at the gate of the temple, loseth its similitude here. For with all his helplessness and inability to his own cure, gladly would he have listened to any, and to every one, that could have given him a sure method of recovery. So, likewise, the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda; he had long waited, and long wished to be healed; he only lamented there was no kind hand to help him into the water. (John v. 6, 7.) And all men universally are alive, and anxious to listen, to all the methods of human invention, when diseased, for the recovery of their bodies. Witness the troops of sick which visit watering-places, and baths, and cloisters, where springs, supposed to be possessed with mineral qualities of a sanative nature, are found; and which are crowded with patients, to lengthen out, if possible life; and sometimes, and not unfrequently, a miserable one it is. Oh! the number-

less invalids which go there; and whose monuments left behind them, in the cemetries surrounding those hospitals, but too sadly speak their woful disappointment! But while this universal anxiety is seen for the recovery of the *body;* what a general indifferency marks the great mass of mankind to the healing of the *soul;* and especially, if seeking it in that way, and in that way only, which the Lord hath appointed! Peter, in the following chapter to the one in which is related the history of the cripple, being filled, as it is said he was, by the Holy Ghost, declared, that not only this poor impotent man, was made whole in body, by the sole name and power of the Lord Jesus Christ; but he added, in relation to the soul, "Neither," (said he) "is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv.)

It will be well to look somewhat a little further into the cause of this universal aversion, which is in every man's heart, by nature, to the way of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ.

And here the Scriptures of God are our only and most infallible guide. We are here taught, that by the apostacy of Adam, his whole posterity not only lost all holiness, in which our nature had been created in him; but the whole race became subjects of inherent sin in the root: every branch and budding of which "is only evil continually." (Gen. vi. 5.) Hence, therefore, until an act of grace hath passed; and by regeneration, the children of God are "renewed in the spirit of their mind," the heart of every son and daughter of Adam is "shut up in unbelief;" so that the whole man, in all his faculties, his will, his understanding, his conscience, all run counter to the reception of Christ, because unbelief turns the whole tide of his affections another way. Unbelief stands as a

sentinel, as long as nature, untaught by grace, holds the government; and no arm, but the arm of God, can open the garrison door. Nay more; unbelief not only keeps out all relief to the soul besieged by sin, but lets in all that pride, self-righteousness, the observance of what is called religious duties, almsgiving, and the form of godliness, can set up in the heart to keep the "strong man armed in peace." (Luke xi. 21.) And while men are in this state of carnal security, it is astonishing with what composure they speak of themselves and their own fancied goodness. The church of Laodicea stood exactly in this situation, when Christ, who knew her spiritual poverty, thus described her: "Thou sayest (said Christ to her) I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Rev. iii. 17.) Here is a portrait of the human heart, shut up in unbelief, as drawn from life, and opened to view in full dissection by the Almighty spiritual anatomist, Jesus Christ himself. And what an awful view doth it unfold, to the workings and corruption within! Who could have supposed, had not the Son of God shewn it, that man, fallen, sinful man, should be such a bubble to himself, as to fancy himself holy, when altogether unclean: and that he needeth nothing to recommend him before God, when in spiritual things, he is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

And *lastly*, to add no more. It will form a full conclusion to the view we have taken of the subject, if we only consider farther, that as every man's heart, and will, and understanding, and conscience, while in the unrenewed state of nature, is thus shut up in unbelief; so there are many corresponding circumstances arising from the world, and from the powers of darkness, which tend to rivet the chains of the carnal man's

security yet more, and make his prison-house impenetrable to any power short of the arm of God.

Here, as in the former instance, the cripple in body, which lay helpless at the gate of the temple, bears no similitude, in point of description, to the crippled in soul. That man entered not the temple, he only lay without: but such as I have in view, enter in: yea, and are full of life and confidence, under the delusion of church ordinances and means of grace. And from a diligent attendance in the trammels of religion, the observance of sacraments and forms of prayers, and the like; and, more especially, if, when making a comparative statement of themselves, with others, they behold the profane and immoral; like the Pharisee, they take comfort in the prospect, and thank God, "that they are not as other men are." (Luke xviii.) The apostle Paul, during the days of his unregeneracy, stood very high in the view he had of himself; and entrenched in the ramparts of Pharisaical righteousness; out of the reach of all the artillery of conviction, except the arrow of God. The account he gave of himself, to this purpose, is very striking: "If any other man thinketh (saith Paul) that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel; of the tribe of Benjamin; an Hebrew, of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness of the law, blameless." (Phil. iii. 4—6.) It would have been a difficult matter in those days, to have convinced Paul, that he had any thing more to do; being, as he calculated, within a few steps of heaven. But what saith the same man, after the Lord Jesus called him by his grace to the knowledge of himself? Let him speak his own words: "I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, (saith he) who hath enabled me, for that he counteth me faithful, putting me into the

ministry who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, (adds Paul,) and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Tim. i. 12—15.)

Shall I observe also, that it is no small addition to the delusion of the mind, which the mere professors of religion receive from the customs of the world, when, like horses in a team, each follows his leader; and content in going with the multitude, stay not to enquire as to the final event. If, at any time it should happen, that the eternal safety of such persons is called in question, men of this complexion will take comfort from the example of others. You will hear them say in justification: Were not my father, or my mother, members of the church, and lived and died in the use of church privileges? And were they not well spoken of in the world, as good sort of people? And can any one doubt but that they are gone to heaven, who lived such good lives upon earth? Shall I alter my religion, or desire to be better than they?

And in the midst of this carnal security, when we take into the account also, the subtilty of the great enemy of souls, to lull such persons on to their ruin; what a phalanx the whole army forms together, to imprison, and shut up the sinner in unbelief. The Holy Ghost, by Paul, hath stated this in strong characters:—"If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, which is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.) The "god of this world" is, by a figure of

speech, meant to refer to Satan; who, elsewhere, is called "the prince of the power of the air; the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." (Eph. ii. 2.) He is thereby represented, as throwing dust into the eyes of his vassals, and keeping them in blindness and ignorance, lest they should run out of his kingdom. And indeed, until the Lord of hosts, by a sovereign act of grace, opens the eyes of all such, in their spiritual understanding, and breaks down their prison-walls, they remain for ever in darkness and the shadow of death. Hence, therefore, very blessedly it is added, in a verse or two after, in the same Scripture, that the emancipation of the whole church of God, from these united causes of bondage, is wholly the effect of the divine sovereignty. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 6.)

I pause, for the moment, to ask, whether the impressions of these things have found their bearing on the reader's heart?—Both the crippled in *body*, like this man at the gate of the temple, and the crippled in *soul*, in all ages of the church, can only find salvation in one and the same adorable name. The feet and ancle bones of the one, and the renovation from deadness and death in the other, can receive strength only in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

The next delicious gathering from this Scripture, is the contemplation of the effect wrought upon the cripple, in the powerful name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, instantly on hearing it, leaped up, and entered with the apostles into the temple, "walking and leaping, and praising God." A sight truly animating, if considered only in relation to the *body;* but how infinitely increased, when beheld as repre-

senting the healing of the *soul!* And could the imagination form an adequate idea of what is daily going on in the spiritual church of Christ, when, at his name, all the variety of diseased cases, among his people, find cure; what wonders would appear to our apprehension, which, for the most part, are now hidden and obscured! And yet, such the Holy Ghost taught the people of God to expect in the gospel church; and by which, the presence of the Lord was to be known in the auspicious era which should mark the latter days. "Behold, your God will come with vengeance; even God, with a recompense: he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart; and the tongue of the dumb sing." (Isa. xxxv. 4—6.)

But though thus expressly taught by the Holy Ghost to expect such miracles of grace in the church, and by which the latter day dispensation was to be known; yet the apprehension of it, and the enjoyment of it, is never known, nor felt, nor understood, until by sovereign grace the Lord works the work of faith in the soul. All men, by nature, (like this poor man at the gate of the temple) are crippled in spirit, from their mother's womb; neither can all the effects of nature give to their spiritual feet and ancle bones the least strength to walk. The mind, unawakened, untaught of God, yet, sometimes alarmed about eternity, will send forth her feeble desires for healing, in her own way. A man will endeavour to set up a reform in himself; and in a round of exalted things, aim to pacify the conscience; but conscience, by all her efforts, cannot beget faith. Conscience, when alarmed, will attempt to do any thing, and every thing, self-righteousness can invent; but to *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ, to the sal-

vation of the soul, this is the sole gift of God. (John xvi. 18.)

The Holy Ghost hath himself most graciously explained this doctrine to the church, by the ministry of the prophet Ezekiel; under the similitude of a valley full of dry bones, which (like this cripple at the gate of the temple) had no life, until communicated by the sovereign power of God. "The hand of the Lord was upon me, (saith the prophet) and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley, which was full of bones. And the Lord said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me; Prophesy (that is preach) upon these bones, and say unto them, O, ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied there was a noise; and behold, a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo! the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me; Prophesy unto the wind. Prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God: come from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came in unto them; and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." (Ezekiel xxxvii. 1—10.)

Who doth not, or who will not, see in all this the correct delineation of our whole nature by the fall, like these bones in the valley of this world; or like the cripple at the gate of the temple. The preaching of the prophet to the one, to hear the word of the Lord; or the call of the apostles to the other, to look

on them, had similar effects. The bones moved, and there was a shaking among them; such as ther sometimes is when the consciences of sinners tremble under the preaching of the word; or like the awakened attention of the cripple, expecting to have received something from the apostles. But neither in the one or the other was there any effectual work wrought to the salvation of the soul, until the Holy Ghost breathed upon the slain; and the quickening, life-giving name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, imparted healing to the cripple. Then, and not before, "when the breath came unto the one, they stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army;" and when the other, at the glorious name of our most glorious Christ, felt the divine impulse, and leaped from his crippled state, and "walked, and entered into the temple with the apostles, walking and leaping, and praising God." Such are the blessed effects of regeneration in all instances; however, the enjoyment of it will be more or less, according to the greater or smaller apprehensions of it, received into our spiritual minds. But in respect to the saving efficacy, all is one and the same; the babe, new born in grace, is as truly united to Christ as the oldest disciple of the Lord. And from being made "a partaker of the divine nature," by receiving "the spirit of adoption," all the blessings in Christ, and by Christ, become alike the portion of all. "By him, all that believe are justified from all things." (Acts xiii. 39. 2 Pet. i. 4. Gal. iv. 4. Rom. viii. 15.)

In gathering the many sweet fruits from the bough of this Scripture, we must not overlook that which is held forth for us to pluck also of the effects wrought upon the minds of the lookers on to this miracle. "All the people saw him walking and leaping, and praising God. And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple; and

they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him." Observe, how the Lord overruled his providence in this event; that the cripple being so well known to the people, from his *forty years'* disease; and his being laid "every day at the gate of the temple," made the identity of his person impossible to be mistaken. They could not, therefore, but be fully satisfied of the miracle itself. And observe, moreover, how it is said, that they were "filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him." And among the wonders, though the multitude of the carnal which looked on, saw nothing more than the healing of the body; yet they felt astonished in beholding him with the apostles. "walking and leaping and praising God." Had no other miracle been wrought on this man than that of the body, instead of entering the temple he would probably have ran home; and delighted with the ability which he never before had known of the use of his feet and ancle bones, his first object would have been to have told his neighbours of his cure. But the healing the crippled state of his body, there is every reason to suppose, was accompanied with grace to his soul. The temple, therefore, and not home; praises to God, and not merely information to man; first occupied the cripple's attention. And such is the case with all the Lord's people.

The Holy Ghost hath been pleased to make a very beautiful record of a similar nature, as relating to the church at large, in one of the Psalms, when celebrating the deliverance of the Lord's people from Babylon. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them." Yea, answered the church, "The Lord hath done

great things for us, whereof we rejoice." (Psalm cxxvi. throughout.) So unexpected, so unlooked for, was the deliverance of the church at the time the Lord brought his people from their captivity in Babylon, that to the greater part of the people, like this poor cripple, it seemed too good news to be true. But it was so great also, that they could not refrain, by *outward* acts of holy joy, to testify what *inward* feelings the Lord had given them upon the occasion of his grace and mercy. And so great was it even in the sight of the heathens around, that they were constrained to acknowledge the hand of God in it. And if the heathen acknowledged the hand of God to have been in it, though they knew nothing of the God they spake of; how must this have called forth, as we see it did, the acknowledgment of the Lord's own people!

But shall the writer and reader of these observations stop here? Shall we not, from the contemplation of the church's deliverance from the captivity in Babylon, direct our views to that infinitely higher subject, of which that was but a figure, to the spiritual deliverance of the whole church of Christ, from sin, death, and hell? Did the heathen confess that the Lord did great things then for the church, in bringing the people from Babylon; did the people at the gate of the temple look with astonishment at the cripple then healed; and shall not you and I now behold, with ten thousand times greater wonder and delight, the mighty deliverance which the Lord Jesus Christ hath wrought out and brought in; and by his own incommunicable work, accomplished in the everlasting salvation of his people? Yea, to go one step further. Have we an humble hope that we ourselves are interested in it; and can, and do look back to our original state in nature, when in our spiritual faculties we had

been (like this cripple in body) lame from our mother's womb? And whether, like him, laying at the gate of the temple without, regardless of the ordinances within; or even of entering into the mere trammels of religion; content with the *form*, while ignorant of the *power* of godliness? And have we now, through sovereign grace, like him, found strength in the same adorable name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth? Well may we cry out with the Psalmist, and say, "Who can utter the noble acts of the Lord, or shew forth all his praise?" (Psalm cvi. 2.)

One view more of this interesting scene remains to be noticed; I mean, the earnestness with which the healed cripple clung to the persons of the apostles Peter and John, as they went together into the temple. It is said, that the "lame man which was healed, held Peter and John." Yes: he felt no doubt a great attachment to their persons, as instruments in the Lord's hand, for the mercy he had received. But what were the man's feelings towards the Lord himself, in whose Almighty name the sovereign cure had been wrought? And such is, and must be the case of every one whom the "Lord hath called from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to the living God."

The change wrought upon this cripple, was not unsimilar to what is wrought upon every cripple in soul in the temple of the Lord, when a sovereign cure is accomplished by the mighty power of God. Beggars still we are, only with this vast difference. We no longer make the object of our boon, as the first and great concern of our lives, for the bread that perisheth with using; but for the bread that endureth to everlasting life. Having now tasted that "the Lord is gracious," we find it is impossible to live without constant supplies of the same quickening and re-

newing mercy; but every day, and all the day, we are seeking to drink of the streams of that river, "which make glad the city of God." (Psalm xlvi. 4.) The Holy Ghost hath most blessedly expressed this cleaving to Christ, in one of his verses of Scripture by the apostle Paul. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught; abounding therein with thanksgiving." (Col. ii. 6, 7.) Now what is it to "walk in Christ;" and to be "rooted and built up in Christ;" but to feel the same need of him, as when at first we received him? For have I any more to bring Christ, than I had the first moment I received Christ? Did this cripple at the gate of the temple bring any thing for his cure, when at the command of the apostles, in the name of the Lord Jesus, he arose up and walked? Did he (as some would have it) do the best he could, and leave Christ to do the rest? The fact is the contrary. Alas! he was in body, as all men by nature are in soul, helpless and impotent from his mother's womb. And if he then received Christ, as the whole cause of his healing; a beggar to Christ he continued, for all he stood in need of to the very end of his being.

Let us for the moment drop the view of the cripple at the gate of the temple, and bring home the doctrine to ourselves, and to our own hearts. If you or I have truly and spiritually received Christ Jesus our Lord; it can be no difficult point to ascertain how we received him. Every one who knows the plague of his own heart, knows as Paul saith he did: "I know that in me (said Paul) that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." (Rom. vii. 18.) Under this conviction, it will undeniably follow, that as we first received Christ, so the right apprehension is to receive him now. I have no more to bring him, in a way of

recommendation, the very last day of my continuance upon earth, than I had the first day I heard of his holy name. And as I did not then, no more than the cripple, halve it with Christ; so neither can I now. As the blessed truth is expressed in one of the Psalms, so doth it entirely correspond with the spiritual state and condition of the Lord's people. "My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day: for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." (Psalm lxxi. 15, 16.)

And if within a parenthesis I might express, without giving offence, my apprehension of the subject, I would say, that I venture to believe, if this gracious plan of salvation, taught and commended as it is by the Holy Ghost himself in this Scripture, was diligently regarded; preached by all ministers in the churches; and by grace, made the practice of the Lord's people who profess the truth as it is in Jesus; it would tend, under the Lord's blessing, more effectually to humble the pride of our own hearts, and promote the divine glory in a scriptural and spiritual demonstration; that the salvation of the church, from beginning to end, is all of divine accomplishment. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. ii. 8, 9.)

I only add a prayer to the God of all grace, that the perusal of this sovereign act of divine mercy manifested to this poor cripple, may be accompanied with the sweet savour of the same divine love to all the Lord's redeemed ones. That as the apostle told the astonished multitude which looked on "his name, through faith in his name, which made this man strong; yea, the faith which is by him," may give to the whole of his family "a perfect soundness in the

presence of all." And oh! with what undescribable, yea, inconceivable rapture and joy, will all the ransomed of the Lord return to Zion; healed from all the crippled faculties of sin, and death, and hell, and the grave; when Jesus will bring all his redeemed home, to enter with him into his heavenly temple, "walking and leaping, and praising God!" Then finally, fully, and completely, "shall they come with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isaiah xxxv. 10.)

## PAUL TAKING LEAVE

OF THE

## CHURCH AT EPHESUS.

### HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia; for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

"And from Miletus, he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church." (Acts xx. 16, 17.)

### NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The church at Ephesus, which was once the world's wonder, and of which not a vestige now remains, was founded by God the Holy Ghost, through the instrumentality of his servant, the apostle Paul. We have a very circumstantial account of Paul's ministry at this place, in the preceding chapter of the

Acts of the Apostles. This city, like another Athens, appears to have been wholly given up to idolatry. And it was a place of much pomp, and the corresponding corruptions of life. The inhabitants of the higher order prided themselves much in human learning; if we may judge by the destruction of books, which took place in consequence of special miracles, which were wrought by the hands of Paul. (Acts xix. 6, 12.) But amidst the sad ravages made in our nature by sin, here the Lord had a people to gather out of it to himself. And here, therefore, the Lord first sent his servant Paul to preach the glad tidings of the gospel. And afterwards, the same highly honoured servant of the Lord was made the penman of that most blessed Epistle which bears his name; and which was sent to the church at Ephesus.

I pause here, at the very entrance into the subject of this SCRIPTURE EXTRACTS, to make two or three observations, which are of too striking a nature to be lost, and of too much importance in their eventual consequences, to be but slightly regarded.

And first: I would beg the reader to observe with me, how graciously the Lord hath arranged all the events of his kingdom, that even in the most unpromising place, and under the most unpromising circumstances, the Lord hath "a seed to serve him." You see, amidst all the idolatry of the Ephesians; yea, even those among them, who, like the rest, were all alike carried away unto these dumb idols; the Lord had those that were his own. And such is the case in all the instances of our fallen, debased, and degraded nature. When the same apostle was at Corinth, and so discouraged by the general dissolute manners of the people, that it appeared to him but labour lost to preach the gospel unto them; the Lord appeared unto Paul, in a vision of the night, and said: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for

I am with thee; and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city." (Acts xviii. 9, 10.) And blessed be our God, we have full confidence to know, that such is the same in all ages. In this our sinful land, which like Ephesus and Corinth of old, is full of uncleanness, and blasphemy, and idolatry, the Lord hath much people in it. And though all of them, in the original state of nature, are alike living, during the days of their unregeneracy, in the same sins; and under the dominion of the same raging lusts as others; yet when the Lord, by the ministry of his holy word, and by the influences of his Holy Spirit, searcheth, and seeketh them out; they then are discovered to be the Lord's peculiar people; and do "shew forth the praises of Him, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Pet. ii. 9.)

A second observation, which ariseth from this view of the subject, is the wonderful ordination of the Lord, in either sending the gospel to his people, in the midst of their idolatry and uncleanness; or bringing them to the gospel, that they may hear "the joyful sound, and walk in the light of God's countenance." Very blessedly the Lord hath taught this to the church, in a great variety of instances. "The Lord causeth it to rain upon one city, and not upon another." (Amos iv. 7.) He withholdeth the showers, that there shall be no vintage in the natural world; or he maketh the sweet manifestations of his grace to come down as the dew upon the mown grass, in the spiritual. (Ps. lxxii. 17.) How little soever these things are observed by men, the ordination is silently carried on by the ministration of the Lord. The clouds in the natural world, are not more directed by the common atmosphere of the wind, and air, than the mystical clouds, in the spiritual world, are directed by the Lord the Spirit. Hence Paul shall be sent to Macedon; and

a woman of Thyatira, shall be directed to meet him there; both alike unconscious of the Lord's hand in it, until the event proved it. Then we read that "the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, to attend to the things which were spoken of Paul." (Acts xvi. 9. 14.)

One observation more on this interesting subject. The epistle sent to the church at Ephesus, shews to what a state of ripeness in divine truths the Lord had brought this people. The Lord himself hath marked their then character by their name; they were called, the "saints which are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus." (Eph. i. 1.) But let not the reader overlook the vast design of this most blessed Epistle; which contains within its bosom, more or less, an epitome of the whole gospel. It was not only for the church, for the time being, then at Ephesus, that this most precious book of God was written; but for the whole church of God, in all ages and generations. Thousands who have never seen, nor ever will see Ephesus, have found cause, and do still find cause, to bless God, the Holy Ghost, for Paul's ministry and writings to that people. Yea, ages yet unborn, will arise in succession, to bless God for it, until time shall be no more.

It forms a subject, however, for trembling apprehension, in beholding the awful aspect of the present day, as it relates to the blasphemy, and other portentous signs of this our British Ephesus, in this Christ-despising generation. And when we call to mind that that once highly-favoured spot hath no more a church in it; that as the Lord Jesus himself threatened; "Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of its place." (Rev. ii. 7.) The Lord hath done it. The candlestick is long since removed; and the place inhabited by the

deluded followers of the false prophet, spoken of by John. (Rev. xix. 20.) So, that the once flourishing city of Ephesus, is now a wretched, desolate village; peopled but by a few; and they, ignorant of all divine truths. What a solemn consideration to all that remain! True, indeed, the church, that is, the spiritual, regenerated, church of Christ, is above all change. She must stand, and will stand, for ever.—But the candlestick in the Lord's house, as in other houses, is a moveable part of the furniture. And the Lord hath no where promised, that it shall not be removed. As the Lord did by Ephesus, so will the Lord do by all other nations! while the church herself, founded upon the rock Christ Jesus, may not be moved, but standeth fast for ever.

But to return to the subject of this Extract:—It appears from the context, in this part of Paul the apostle's history, that after an uproar, which the preaching of Paul had occasioned at Ephesus; he determined to go into Macedonia; and having gone over various parts, he took ship to sail into Syria; and made a circuit of several months, in going from one place to another, preaching the gospel of Christ. At length, arriving at Miletus, he determined to call to him the elders of the church, which were at Ephesus, to give them his farewell counsel and blessing. Ephesus was no small distance from Miletus; but the apostle foresaw that it would be the last interview which he should ever have with that people. And as he hastened, if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem, on the feast of Pentecost; no time therefore, could be lost, in convening the elders of the church at Ephesus together. The feast of Pentecost opened a prospect of great usefulness. Pentecost, for ever memorable in the church of Christ, from the first events of that blessed day when God, the Holy Ghost, gave public testimony to the word of his grace,

on the multitude of Jerusalem sinners, converted on the spot, by his Almighty power. The apostle, having this in remembrance, hastened, if it were possible, for him to be there on that day. He had it in contemplation, do doubt, and looked forward to the full expectation of it, what he afterwards wrote to his beloved Titus, "for the renewing of the Holy Ghost, to be shed abundantly on the church, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." (Titus iii. 5, 6.) But while these glorious objects were in the apostle's view; and he anticipated, already, a renewed Pentecost, in the memorial of it, to himself, and the people; his love would not let him depart from the church, with whom he then was, before that he had first taken a farewell; and as the apostle knew that it would be a long, and last farewell, of the saints at Ephesus. And as he could not, with safety to his person, nor within the limits of time allowed him, take a journey to them; he sent to call them to him; filling up no doubt the interval of their journey, in the use of ordinances, and the means of grace, with the church at Miletus.

There is somewhat very affecting, in the account of the parting of a faithful pastor with the Lord's faithful people. And the several records of the kind, which the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to make of such scenes, in various parts of his sacred word, serve to shew, in what esteem it is held by the Lord himself. When Moses, the man of God, was about to die, we have related to us the blessing wherewith he blessed Israel, before his death. (Deut. xxxiii. 1, &c.) And when the time of Joshua's departure was near, he also took occasion to remind Israel of the faithfulness of God. (Joshua xxiii.) Nay, to lose sight of the Lord's servants—what a very large and very blessed representation, hath God the Holy Ghost recorded, for the church's continual meditation of the Lord Jesus, himself, thus address-

ing his disciples, before his departure. That sweet, and costly supper; and that lovely, and all-loving discourse, with which the Lord closed in his divine ministry, are standing memorials of the kind. So that backed with such authority and example, they shew the loveliness of the thing itself, as well as the divine pleasure, in the sympathy of souls, when faithful pastors and faithful followers of the Lord, are separated from each other. (See Luke xxii. throughout. John xiv. xv. xvi. xvii.)

In relation to the interesting record before us, of Paul's taking leave of the church of Ephesus; let the reader figure to himself, the faithful apostle encircled by the elders of the church, arrived from that city; and no doubt, the whole of the brethren of Miletus also in the throng. Let him behold the apostle, standing up in the midst before them, breathing out his very soul in the warmness of affection; while, for the last time, holding forth to them the word of life; let him thus figure to his imagination, the solemn circle; and, if the Lord gives, both to the writer and reader, a spiritual and scriptural apprehension of the great truths contained in the apostle's discourse, we shall derive both pleasure and profit from the divine record; and find cause to bless the Holy Ghost, for causing the history to have been preserved to the church, and handed down to us, in the present hour.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons.

"Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befel me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house.

"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts xx. 18—21.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The first part in this animated address of Paul is his appeal to the whole church of God, concerning himself, and the character which he had sustained among the people. "Ye know (said he) from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons." And this exordium of his discourse became the more necessary; that in both his conduct and doctrine their own consciences might bear witness to the integrity and faithfulness of his character. He had called himself an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God. It behoved him, therefore, to prove that he was so legally constituted; and that he had not assumed to himself, that high and sacred office, uncalled, unauthorized, unsent.

Let us examine, and on Scriptural testimony, what Paul asserted. The right apprehension of the apostle's character, in the church of God, even in the present hour, is of the utmost magnitude. For it is to be feared, by what is going on in life, that the ordination of God, in this momentous concern, is not regarded, even by professors of the gospel, in the sacred light it ought. For, if the whole of the apostle's ministry, both in preaching and in writing, be not received, as the effect of inspiration, in which there could be no possibility of any mixture of error; their inspired authority, being in a single instance questioned, the doctrines delivered by them will be questioned also; and the private opinion of men, as

their several fancies may vary, will, more or less, prompt them to slight or regard, the authority of God.

Such indeed, is the high dignity and character, both of the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New; that the church of Christ is said to be built upon this foundation; "Jesus Christ, himself, being the chief corner-stone." (Eph. ii. 20.) That is, Christ, and only Christ, himself, the foundation which God hath laid in Zion: the whole sum and substance of the holy Scriptures, delivered by those men, being under the entire inspiration of the Holy Ghost; the foundation of the church upon Christ, is according to those Scriptures. Hence, therefore, the most cordial belief in their authority, as apostles; the most perfect conviction, that all they wrote or preached, concerning the truths of God, is wholly unmixed with error; that however, as men of like passions with ourselves, they lived and died, in the knowledge of the plague of their own heart; and needed in themselves, as much as the humblest and weakest of the Lord's family, salvation, complete and finished, in the Lord Jesus Christ; yea, and confessed and owned, and rejoiced in it, too; yet, their whole preaching and writing, had, and hath, infallible marks of divine inspiration; and as is said, under that authority, concerning the Old Testament dispensations, so the same holds good under the New: "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. i. 20, 21.)

In relation to the claim of Paul to the office of an apostle, we are furnished in the Scriptures of truth with very ample testimony. He was called to from heaven, and ordained to be an apostle, by Christ himself. (See Acts ix. 1—16.) Indeed, but for this mani-

festation of the Lord Jesus, to him thus personally, (I speak with reverence) he could not have been an apostle. For when Peter, under the authority of the Holy Ghost, proceeded with the rest of the apostles to chose an apostle, in the place of the traitor Judas, and addressed the college of apostles on this subject; this was made the qualification; "One (said Peter) must be ordained to be a witness, with us, of his (Christ's) resurrection." See the whole sermon, Acts i. 15. to the end. Hence we find Paul modestly appealing for the testimony of his apostleship: both from this sight of Christ, after our Lord's resurrection; and from the unction of the Holy Ghost, accompanying his ministry in his word. (See 1 Cor. ix. 1, 2.) The proof therefore, of Paul's claim to the apostleship, is most amply proved. But reader! what shall be said of such as impose upon the credulity of mankind, in assuming the name of apostle, in direct defiance of this qualification, marked by the Holy Ghost; and without any authority from God? What a trembling Scripture is that, from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, in his message to the church at Ephesus: "These things, saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. I know thy works and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." (Rev. ii. 1, 2.)

I pause for one moment, just to ask the reader, what his own personal views are of this statement, concern- the true apostles of Christ? It is a momentous question. And the decision of it, when formed under divine teaching, must lead to the most important consequences. If you really believe that these holy men of old both spake and wrote, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, it will undeniably follow, that in

hearing or reading those sacred truths of God, as delivered by those men, under the inspiration of God, we do, to all intents and purposes, hear or read the word of God himself. So spake our Lord, when sending forth his disciples to preach: "He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me: and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." (Luke x. 16.) And what a very sweet and very precious testimony it is, when at any time, the redeemed and regenerated child of God hears or reads the holy Scriptures of our God; and feels, at the same time, that unction in the word, and that savour of Christ, accompanying the word, of which Jesus himself speaks, when he saith: "The words that I speak, they are spirit, and they are life." (John vi. 63.) Oh! how blessedly do they confirm all the great truths of God. Here, babes in Christ, as fully as the young men, or fathers in God, find equal faith, and equal joy; for this is the faith of the operation of the Holy Ghost; and is not founded in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Hence, the apostle blessed God, for the church, on this account, "without ceasing, because, when they received the word of God, which they heard from him; they received it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also, in them that believe." (1 Thess. ii. 14.)

The apostle, having thus first made an appeal to the church, concerning himself, and the faithfulness of his character, he next proceeds to call to their recollection, the great and leading points of the doctrine, which he had preached among them; namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the glories of his person; and in the fulness and all-sufficiency of his salvation. And if we may judge by what is here said, in a brief and comprehensive manner; and what is more fully opened and explained in that beautiful epistle which

bears his name, and which he afterwards sent from Rome, by Tychicus, to his church; Paul, made the whole sum and substance of all he said, and all he wrote, "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. ii. 2.) Christ, was Paul's only text, and sermon, and exhortation.

I do not think it necessary to enlarge upon the several particulars here spoken of by the apostle, which he brought forth as proofs of what he had preached to them. The whole of what is here said, (as well as what follows to the same amount in the after part of this chapter,) is in itself so simple, so plain, and so truly apostolical, that it would rather suffer, by any comment, than receive benefit in the illustration. And if the Lord, the Spirit, shall be graciously pleased to accompany the perusal of it with his divine unction, to the spiritual apprehension, both of him that now writes, and him that hereafter shall read, then will be found the blessedness which the Holy Ghost intended, from causing it to be recorded; and of preserving it from all the ravages of time, through the intermediate ages; and handing it down to the church, to the present hour.

I would only beg, on this part of Paul's preaching, to offer one word; in observing, how very sweetly he points to the effects, which everlastingly must and will follow, both to Jew and Gentile, where the grand cause is cordially and fully recieved into the heart, namely, "repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." For these are the fulfilment of the divine promises, relative to the latter-day dispensation. The Holy Ghost, by his servant Zechariah, thus predicted the era of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the blessed effects which should follow: "I will pour, (saith the Lord) upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of suppli-

cations, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced: and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son; and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." (Zech. xii. 10.) And in every instance where the Lord pours out of his Holy Spirit, it is impossible but such effects must follow. For the Lord himself, it is here said, is the Almighty worker of the whole. He it is that first opens, and by his grace keeps open, a constant source, and spring, of real, unfeigned repentance, and heart-felt sorrow. A sorrow, which in all its streams, manifests the fountain from whence it flows; and what the same apostle elsewhere calls, "a sorrow, after a godly manner. For, godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death." (2 Cor. vii. 9, 10.) And this is in exact correspondence to what the Lord Jesus, himself, taught concerning the gracious acts of God, the Holy Ghost; and by which he should be known in the hearts and minds of his people. "When he is come (said the Lord Jesus) he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on me. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." (John xvi. 8. 11.) Here, the Lord Jesus most plainly and decidedly shews, that the coming of the Holy Ghost, after his return to glory, in sending down his ascension gifts upon the church; and carrying these convictions in the hearts and consciences of his people; both proved his GODHEAD, and their sinfulness, in not believing him. So that their sin, and total ruin by nature, and his righteousness, as the sole means of their salvation by grace, clearly demonstrated both; and condemned, in their own consciences, "the prince of this world;" under whose

delusion, they had all along lived in unbelief. I beg the reader to pause over this statement, and ponder well the solemn contents of it. Every man by nature is an unbeliever. It is impossible for him to be otherwise. And no power less than the divine power can convince him of original sin. And where there is not a conviction of original sin, there can be no conviction, or any true spiritual apprehension, either of the glorious person, or of the finished righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. These doctrines are never learnt in nature's school. And it is the want of this divine teaching which is the sole cause of all those slender views of sin with which the carnal world rest satisfied. As long as men remain untaught of God, in a state of unrenewed, unregenerate nature, they never will, yea, they never can, make any true calculation of sin, and of the tremendous consequences in which the whole mass of mankind are thereby involved. They judge of sin wholly by effects, in the breaking out of it, like blotches on the body, here and there in eruptions; but wholly overlook the cause. Hence, therefore, when the Holy Ghost comes, and "lays judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet;" sweeps away the refuge of lies; and the "waters overflow the hiding place;" (Isa. xxviii. 17.) then, and not before, the soul, is "reproved of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." The weapons of sin fall from the sinner's hands; and the work of sovereign grace is felt in his heart. And then follows what the apostle testified, both to Jews and Greeks, "repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ." True, sincere, unfeigned repentance, unalloyed with any mixture of any supposed good; but seeing, feeling, confessing, the utterly lost, ruined, and undone estate of all men by the fall; and all as equally involved in one and the same condemnation.

For the very essence, and inherency of sin is alike derived from the first transgressor; and all wrapt up, and included, both in his original sin, and in his actual condemnation. And at the same time, there will be, and, from the same teaching, must be, a lively faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; from an entire spiritual act of looking wholly off, and from self, and looking wholly to and upon the Lord Jesus Christ; in his person, blood, and righteousness; and all this, as a sure and full release from sin, and all its guilt, and consequences, the result of divine teaching. Hence, the apostle made his appeal to the church, that he had, uniformly, made this the sum and substance of his preaching: "I have kept back nothing, (said he) that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ."

I must not, indeed I dare not, pass away from this solemn consideration of the subject, without first asking the reader, whether such a sense of divine truths is upon his mind, as was evidently upon the mind of the apostle, when he thus expressed himself to the church. If ever there was a point, fully and clearly established, according to the preaching of the apostle Paul, both in this farewell discourse, and the subsequent epistle to the church of Ephesus; as well as the general tenor of all his preachings and writings to all the churches; surely, the prominent lustre, which, like a star of the first magnitude, shines in the whole firmament, is the everlasting love of God, in his trinity of persons, to his church; as manifested in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the constant, invariable, and unwearied, subject of Paul's whole ministry. Had the apostle not preached this glorious system, as one complete whole;

never could he, so confidently, have appealed to them, as he here did; "that he had kept back nothing that was profitable to them." It would have been to have kept back every thing that was blessed, and profitable, had he not made this everlasting love of God to his church in Christ, the bottom and basis, from whence all, and every part of the superstructure, in the building of the church of Christ, was made to arise. The glorious doctrine of God the Father's everlasting love, in the choice of his church in Christ; the union of Christ, with his church, from everlasting; and the recovery of the church for the time-state of the fall, by redemption in his blood and righteousness; and the whole grace acts of God the Holy Ghost in his person, GODHEAD, and ministry; these are the fundamentals of all vital godliness. And these, like so many links in one chain, are connected together; and form one great whole, in Paul, the apostle's ministry. The Lord, who ordained his servant to the ministry, and made him faithful to God, and to the souls of men, graciously bless the word by him delivered to the church, and render the whole effectual to the purpose intended; "to make wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus."

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And now behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things which shall befal me there:

"Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, That bonds and afflictions abide in me.

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus; to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts xx. 22—24.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

There is somewhat very striking in Paul's account of this, his intended journey. "I go bound in the spirit;" meaning, that there was a constraint upon him to go. He felt the Lord's direction, concerning it. Every thing, according to human policy, and human wisdom, was against it. The enemies of God, and of his Christ, were weighty and powerful in that city. And the friends of Paul were very earnest with him that he should not go. But this constraining love, and direction of the Holy Ghost, like a mighty stream, carried before it all opposition. And though the same Almighty Spirit witnessed to Paul, that bonds and imprisonments were in his way; yet go he would. And as we read in the following chapter; when he arrived at Cesarea, and a certain prophet, named Agabus, took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said: "Thus saith the Holy Ghost; So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle; and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles;" and in consequence thereof, the whole of the apostle Paul's friends, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem; the apostle cried out; "What mean ye, to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts xxi. 10—13.) Oh! what a magnanimity of soul can grace induce! We behold the apostle here, under the divine influence of it, challenging both bonds, and imprisonment, and death! "I am ready," (said Paul.) As if the block, on which to lay his head, and the executioner, was before him; and the signal given for his martyrdom, had gone forth.

The reader will do well here again to pause;

and ponder the mighty efficacy of sovereign grace, which is capable of imparting such strength upon the most trying occasions. Prisons may shut men in; but no prison can shut Christ out. And if the Lord permits the rage of men to go so far, as to make his faithful ones lodge in the solitary dungeon; yet, if Christ enters with them, sits up by them, causeth them to "sup with him, and he with them;" such divine society converts the prison into a palace; and as the spouse saith in the Canticles: "While the king sitteth at the table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." (Song i. 12.)

What a beautiful illustration is given of this to the church, by the Holy Ghost; concerning the three worthies, as related in the book of Daniel. "Do you not serve my gods; (said the tyrant of Babylon, to those faithful servants of the Most High) nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now, if ye be ready, at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour, into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. We are not careful; (said the Lord's faithful ones in return:) we are not careful, to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us out of thine hand; and he will deliver. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, we will not serve thy gods; nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." And what was the sequel? They were cast into the midst of the burning furnace. And the Lord went with them. So that they walked unhurt, in the midst of the fire; for "the fire had no power over their bodies, neither was an hair of their head singed, nor the smell of fire passed on them." (Daniel iii. throughout.) It is most blessed to behold the sweet

correspondence of God's promises with events. By his servant the prophet Isaiah, the Lord seemed to allude to this very extent; as well as to give support to his faithful servants in their trials through all ages. For thus we read: "But now, thus saith the Lord, that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel; Fear not; for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by my name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the water, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." (Isaiah xliii. 1, 2.) And here we see it literally fulfilled. And who shall say, in what a multitude of instances, the same is going on now daily in the world; in which the Lord makes even in the present hour, a manifestation of himself in the temporal, as well as the spiritual deliverance of his faithful people! It is both blessed and profitable at all times, to trace his mercies; and to behold how the Lord is both a promising and performing God.

In relation to Paul, those divine promises were realized over and over again. For he gives a long catalogue of what he was called upon to go through during his eventful pilgrimage; both now going up to Jerusalem, and in other parts of his life. "In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." (2 Cor. xi. 26, 27.)

It is very blessed, when through grace, the child of God can preserve an equanimity of soul, whatever the providences he meets with be in the Lord's appointment. Perils by sea, or perils by land, are

all the same in respect to exercise: for all originate with God. "I know, (said one of old, who could not be mistaken,) I know O Lord that thy judgments are right; and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." (Psalm cxix. 75.) It is not enough to say, that if the Lord's people are brought into trouble, the Lord will bring them out of it. We must say *more;* for if we are truly taught of God, we *know* more. And, I speak with reverence, when I say, that God's faithfulness is as much known and proved too, by *bringing* his people into trouble, as God's faithfulness is known and proved, "in carrying them through it, and bringing them out of it." Paul could not have known, as he did know, and proved thereby, the Lord's faithfulness, in saving him from shipwreck, if the Lord had not brought him into perils of waters. The most formidable storm, and even the ship covered with waves, cannot appal, while faith eyes the Lord at the rudder; and guiding as an Almighty Pilot, the bark safely through the deep. Neither will perils by land overwhelm the soul; for they are also made blessed, when those very adverse circumstances give occasion, in the consciousness of all human strength failing, to rely wholly upon the Lord's all-sufficiency. "None of those things move me," (said Paul.) No: nor will they move the feeblest of the Lord's tried ones, when they are enabled to see that the Lord's hand is in the trial; and the Lord's glory is to be the issue of the trial. Oh! the unspeakable felicity of eyeing the Lord in all things; this cannot fail to give the child of God grace to bless the Lord in all things.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

"Wherefore, I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

"For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

"Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

"Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

"Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

"I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts xx. 25—35.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

Amidst the vast subject, with which the mind of the apostle was occupied, in his farewell sermon to the church at Ephesus, however it became a minor consideration in things relating to himself, and to the faithfulness of his ministry; yet, he could not altogether bid adieu; and especially, as he foresaw that parting was final and for ever: knowing he should see their face no more, until he had once more bid them recollect that he stood free and un-

impeached in his labours, from the blood of all men. A servant of Christ, who hath not shunned to declare to the people committed to his charge, the whole counsel of God, can truly make this appeal. No doubt, on this ground, be the event what it may, it is a solemn consideration, when a church and people is able to charge neglect to the minister; or the minister feels constrained to charge neglect to the church and people. But however painful in either or in both instances; there is to be no hesitation. The affection subsisting between men loseth the very name, when brought in competition to the duty we owe God. It is the Lord's work, not man's, and to the Lord, as his master, the minister standeth or falleth. The tenderest natural feelings can admit of no departure from the unerring line of truth in this particular. Nay, without a constant regard to this, as the first leading principle of obligation; a mistaken tenderness to the people may prompt to a forgetfulness of the Lord. Paul, upon another occasion, hath drawn the line to shew this straitness of conduct—when speaking to servants, he said, "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing, that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ." (Col. iii. 22—24.)

We have a beautiful illustration of the apostle's faithfulness in his ministry, in the solemn charge he gave to Timothy upon the occasion. Timothy was very dear to Paul; and he called him his dearly beloved son. But the Lord Jesus Christ, and his church, Paul felt to be infinitely dearer. Hence we find the aged apostle, in the very last epistle he wrote, and but a little before his martyrdom, thus addressing

Timothy: "I charge thee, (said he) before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing, and his kingdom; preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Tim. iv. 1—4.) He seems by the very solemn expressions here used, and by the manner in which he used them, as if he had summoned Timothy before the very tribunal of God; and in the impending judgment, if he neglected the office he had entered into, to keep in remembrance the almighty witness of God himself, as present at his ordination. It were well, if Paul's conduct, herein, was made the model of all preachers and hearers. And if without offence it may be added, in the present day, yet more strikingly; for the time the apostles predicted is in truth come. The sound doctrine of the holy Three in One, which bear record in heaven, which is the very basis of all divine revelation, is but too frequently kept out of view. The everlasting love of God the Father to the church in Christ; and the betrothing and redeeming love of Christ to his church; with all the saving truths of the work of God the Holy Ghost upon the heart; these are among the sound doctrines, which very many refuse to hear. It appears that Paul, blessed as he was with the spirit of prophecy, foresaw these things hanging over the church. And hence he said: "For I know that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter in among you, and also of your ownselves shall men arise, speaking perverse things." The Lord look upon his church, and keep her from such awful judgments; and give "pastors according to his own heart;

which shall feed his people with knowledge and understanding." (Jer. iii. 15.)

I cannot refrain from detaining the reader with a short observation upon those striking words of the apostle, in his charge to the elders of the church at Ephesus; when he calls upon them, "to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." I stay not to make any observations on the expression in that the church is called a flock; for this is frequently given to the church in the holy Scriptures. But what is not so generally understood; and therefore, not so highly regarded, as the infinite importance of the subject demands; is the great depth of mystery in the term: when God is said to have "purchased his church with his own blood." There are very many wonders in the subject of redemption; yea, "God, manifest in the flesh," with which it begins, is in itself a depth of mystery, perfectly unfathomable by the longest line of human intellect. And this, of "purchasing his church with his own blood" is another, among the inscrutable counsels of God. But let us only look at a few of the particulars, among those deep things of God; and mark in it the infinite grace of God.

First: God is said to have "purchased his church." We know that the church was given by the Father, before all worlds, to his dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is said no less, that when by sin, our whole nature fell in the Adam-transgression, the church fell into the same condemnation; and therefore, when Christ died for his people, it was to redeem the forfeited inheritance. Hence, the church is called, "the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Eph. i. 14.) But this is not all. The church given by the Father, and and when lost, redeemed by the Son, is no less made the subject of the Spirit's love, in the sove-

vereign act of grace he wrought in regenerating our ruined and depraved nature. Though marked as the flock of Christ, by the Father, and when enslaved by sin ransomed by Christ; yet, still being in our sins, "and alienated from God, by wicked works," it became necessary to be regenerated, and renewed in the spirit of our minds, by God the Holy Ghost, and this is what is called in Scripture, "the earnest of the Spirit." (2 Cor. v. 5.)

Secondly: The subject riseth in sublimity, when it is said, that God, hath "purchased the church, with his own blood." Observe, his own, meaning personally his own; and not another. And the depth of the mystery lies in this; Christ being God, as well as man; and God and man, in one person; what became the property, or act of the one, included the other also, and the infinite preciousness of the price given, for the purchase of the church became so, on this account. The person of Christ, who, in his compound nature, was, and is, and everlastingly must be, God, as well as man; and man, as well as God; by this purchase, gave his own blood, and therefore the expression, marvellous as it is, is perfectly correct; "the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

Thirdly: Pause, and contemplate the vast and incalculable price of such a purchase! Not the blood of bulls, or goats, or lambs, or sacrifices, upon a thousand altars. All the offerings of mankind from the garden of Eden, when the first sacrifice was made; to the latest period, during the whole time-state of the world; never could, and indeed, never were designed, to take away sin; but, only a shadowy representation of this one offering, "of the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. xiii. 8.) Not all the ordinances and means of grace, services, sacraments, prayers, tears, penances, reforms, pilrimages, vows, offerings; and all the fruit of the

body, given for the sin of the soul; ever could, any of them, or all of them, take away one sin. Nay; so far are they from recommending to the favour of God, that they are offensive to God; and unless the sacrifices themselves, and the offerers of them, are cleansed and perfumed by this blood, spoken of by Paul, they add sin to sin. Oh! who among elders, ministers, and clergy, whether in the church, or out of the church, who properly understand these precious things, from being taught of God, but would take heed to "feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood!" This, and this only, is the laver, which cleanseth from sin; all sin, original sin, actual sin, natural sin, spiritual sin; yea all sin. Reader, think, (if it be possible) of the infinite importance of it! But for this redemption of the church, which our God hath purchased with his own blood, our condemnation would be inevitable. It is this which prevents us from being ruined, even on our very knees, and before God. Our prayer sins, our sacramental sins, our conversation sins; even in our most holy things; all would condemn. The church, John saw, had "washed their robes," (not their sins only, but their robes;) "and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 14.) Well might Paul give the solemn charge to the elders of the church: "Take heed to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood!"

One word more, on this farewell discourse of Paul. When speaking to the elders of the church, of the blessedness of that wise indifference to the things of time and sense; and of rather ministering to others of the Lord's bounty in what he hath blessed us with, than being ministered unto; he adds as the best and most conclusive of all arguments; "remembering (said he) the words of the Lord Jesus; how he said, It is more blessed to give, than to receive."

But where or when did the Lord Jesus speak these words? Neither of the evangelists have recorded them. And yet this precious saying of our most precious Lord, must have been delivered by him, during his divine ministry. It should seem therefore, as if God the Holy Ghost was graciously pleased, that the writers of the gospel should not notice them in the life of Christ; that the Lord the Spirit might teach the church, hereby, the vast importance of the Lord's saying, in His preserving the words by themselves; and thus inspired Paul to notice them in this very sweet and blessed manner. The Holy Ghost would have those words of Christ specially, and particularly, noticed, for the comfort and instruction of the church, in all the future ages and generations, down to the end of time: and therefore in his infinite wisdom, was pleased to adopt this method, as the best and most effectual, for that purpose.

And what a blessed fulness there is, in those divine words of Christ. With the Lord Jesus himself, it hath been ever thus; for he is blessed in giving; and what can be given to him to make him more blessed? I would recommend the reader, to the perpetual use of those words of our glorious Christ, whenever he presents himself before the Lord. I have found the blessedness of so doing myself; and therefore, as a matter fully proved, can safely recommend the plan to others. I take with me to the Lord, the words of the Lord; and when lodging my petition before his kingly presence, I say: Lord, these are thine own words, it is my Lord hath said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" and therefore, as from this divine authority I am taught that the giver is more blessed than the receiver; thou, O Lord wilt be more blessed, as the author and giver of my salvation, than I shall be, in receiving that salvation; for while all the benefit is

mine, all the glory will be thine. Surely, here is the strongest of all pleas, at the mercy seat; when through grace, we can, and do, speak to our God in our God's own words; and tell him, as his glory is infinitely more important than our happiness; that which first moved him to give still continues to be the first of all motives to continue the unmerited mercy; and "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

"And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him.

"Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship." (Acts xx. 36—38.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

What a blessed close was here made of this most animated and endearing discourse of the apostle's. And what a lovely portrait might be made of such a scene! Let the reader figure to himself, the faithful servant of the Lord, encircled by the Lord's faithful people. Let him behold the whole assembly on their knees before the Lord. Having said to the church all that grace had taught, and nature could feel, combined in affection to their persons, now following up the whole with prayer to the God of all mercies, for his blessing. And surely the same Lord who taught the apostle to preach, taught him no less to pray. And although the Holy Ghost hath not recorded the prayer, as he hath the sermon, yet no doubt, there was a beautiful sameness in both; and manifesting that which comes *from* God will always lead *to* God.

And let the reader present to his imagination, when the prayer was ended, and the time come for their separation from each other, the sorrow which burst forth in the whole assembly. They on their part, falling on the apostle's neck, and testifying their affection with tears and kissing; and Paul tearing himself from their embraces, as one overpowered with their kindness. Oh! what a lovely sight must it have been where the Lord's servant and the Lord's people were so dear to each other; and rivetted in that best and most durable of all bonds; formed in the person, and made one in the blood and righteousness, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ye ministers of my God, who come forth truly to the people in the Lord's name, and by the Lord's ordination, as Paul did; and ye who are ministered unto; let this interesting view of a true pastor, according to the Lord's heart, and the Lord's faithful people, which God the Holy Ghost hath so graciously recorded for the church's comfort and edification, be your pattern and the object of your imitation. Such indeed should be every assembly of the faithful. He that preacheth, should preach as though it were his last sermon. And they who hear, as though they should hear no more. Every separation, and the breaking up of the assembly, as of the final farewell. And when the Lord is present to bless the meeting: the faithful in departure, though separated in body, are still one with each other in Christ: and are led to look forward, and long for that glorious assembly which meet to part no more: "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, and all his redeemed will appear with him in glory."

# PAUL,

## RELATING THE HISTORY OF HIS CONVERSION,

## BEFORE AGRIPPA.

### HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

"I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because, I shall answer for myself this day before thee, touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

"Especially, because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore, I beseech thee to hear me patiently." (Acts xxvi. 1—3.)

### NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The apostle Paul, in that part of the history of his life, in his wonderful conversion; and in the works of his ministry, both in preaching and in writing; was evidently designed to be a perpetual teacher in the church of our most glorious Christ. Nearly two-thirds of the Scripture, contained in the book of the Acts of the apostles; and nearly a third part of the New Testament, taken altogether, the church owes to the labours of this man; under the inspiration of God the Holy Ghost.

The proposed subject of the present Extract, is

that part in the memoirs of the apostle, which hath reference to his relating, before Agrippa, the history of his conversion. And in order that we may the better enter into a scriptural apprehension of the same, we shall do well to connect with it, some of the leading points in the history; which will not only serve to illustrate the subject itself; but open to an infinitely higher concern, in discovering some of the outlines, at least, of the Lord's over-ruling the several events herein contained to his own glory, and the welfare of his people. Not however, to run over too large a tract, which the limits of this work cannot admit; it will be sufficient in this opening of the subject to remark, that this account of Paul's conversion, from Judaism to Christianity, is the third record we have of it, in this book of the Acts of the apostles. The Holy Ghost hath given a most circumstantial account of the history itself in the ninth chapter. The same is again related at large in the twenty-second chapter. And here again, before Agrippa, and a numerous court, assembled upon this occasion, in this twenty-sixth chapter. The marvellous event made such an impression on the apostle's own mind, that he seems to have had it always uppermost in his heart. Hence, in his Epistle to the church at Galatia, he speaks of it in this point of view. (See Gal. i. 11. 16.) And in his first Epistle to his beloved Timothy, he relates the distinguishing grace manifested to him, in that he "was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But, (said Paul,) I obtained mercy; because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus." And then follows, what in some measure serves to explain the cause for which the Holy Ghost hath thrice recorded the history of this event, in his Scriptures; and by a process so wonderful, as no-

thing but his over-ruling power could have brought to pass; that the apostle should relate the history of his conversion, in the audience both of Jews and Gentiles, "This is a faithful saying, (saith Paul) and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." And let the reader particularly mark what follows: "Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." (1 Tim. i. 12. 16.)

We behold somewhat of the Lord's design, in thus making the history of Paul's conversion to form so distinguishing, and so frequent a part in his holy word. But we must not stop here. In that conversion the Lord Jesus Christ had told Ananias, that he had made "Paul a chosen vessel unto him, to bear his name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." (Acts ix. 15.) But speaking after the manner of men; how was it possible that on the subject of religion; and especially the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ; Paul, should ever gain an audience, either from Jew or Gentile? Worthy indeed, as the glorious gospel of the ever-blessed God is of all acceptation, what human probability was there that the apostle would be permitted to stand up before either, to preach *Christ crucified,* which as we are told, and as we cannot but know was, and is, and ever must be, until the same sovereign grace, as converted Paul, converts them—"unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." (1 Cor. i. 23.)

But, reader, so the Lord over-ruled events, that thus it should be. And I pray observe the method, which in the stores of his providence and grace, the Lord appointed for the accomplishment of his pur-

pose. The Lord was pleased that Paul shall first relate the history of his conversion to the Jews; and that in full assembly. Yea, that they shall not only hear the whole of the wonderful subject, without clamour; but give a silent, and a most attentive hearing to it. In bringing about this event, the Lord so arranged things that his faithful servant shall be seized upon by the Jews; apparently, be brought into danger of his life; that this, should not only call forth the men of Israel, but all the city of Jerusalem together into one place. And while these things were transacting, and the Jews upon the point of killing Paul; the Roman captain, with soldiers and centurions, should come upon them, rescue Paul, bind him in chains, and command him to be put in the castle. And now, the end is done, for which this insurrection was made—to bring about the purpose, which the Lord appointed to be accomplished; namely, for Paul to relate to this vast multitude, both of Jews and Romans, the story of his conversion; and here the matter is brought to an issue. "For as the multitude of the people followed after Paul, crying, Away with him, Paul said unto the chief Captain; suffer me I beseech thee to speak unto the people." And the chief captain, contrary to all human expectation, but overruled by Divine Power, gave him licence. And Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with his hand unto the people. And mark what followed. The Lord, who wrought on the chief captain's mind, to give Paul, leave to speak, overruled the people's mind to hear; nay, not only to hear; but we are told, "there was made a great silence." And Paul spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue. Thus the Lord accomplished his gracious purpose, in that the nation of the Jews shall hear, and from the mouth of the apostle himself, the minute account of his wonderful conversion. The whole relation is given to the church at large;

(Acts xxii.) throughout. I stay not here to remark what was the result of Paul's preaching. I reserve this for a subsequent part of our subject. I only beg of the reader to note down in the mean time, how wonderfully the Lord overruled such seemingly alarming events, as the prospect of Paul's death, to Paul's freedom of telling of his conversion to his countrymen the Jews; and to the Lord's glory.

The instance of Paul preaching the same animating subject unto the Gentiles also, as the history of the apostle standing up before Agrippa upon the occasion illustrates, was equally produced in a mysterious way, by the overruling power and ordination of the Lord. In two or three preceding chapters to this one which gives us this relation, we find Paul carried down from Jerusalem to Cesarea, a prisoner, in order to rescue him out of the hands of the Jews. And after various attempts to criminate the apostle, which all his enemies found ineffectual; and two whole years having elapsed, during which Paul was kept in confinement; the time was now arrived when the Lord would have his servant rehearse the wonderful history of his conversion before the Roman Governor Festus, and the people of Cesarea: as he had before done before the Jews at Jerusalem. But the Lord was so pleased to order matters, for the greater publicity of this distinguishing grace shewn Paul, that not content with the Governor of Cesarea, and his court, hearing it; by his providence, he so overruled events, that Agrippa who was one of the deputy governors also, like Festus under the Roman Emperor, with his wife Bernice; and no doubt, a train of his courtiers also, should be present. So, that though in chains, and a prisoner, Paul shall twice deliver, in the most public manner possible, and before an immense assembly, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The reader will be now, in some measure, the better prepared for entering with more apprehension of the subject upon this memorable transaction in the court of Festus. Let him figure to himself this great assembly. Let him observe what the Scripture hath stated concerning it, in the close of the preceding chapter. Agrippa and his wife had come down to salute Festus: and to congratulate him on his accession to the government of Cesarea. And Festus, having as a matter of mere conversation, mentioned the case of this poor, cruelly treated prisoner, Paul, to the king; Agrippa, proposed to hear the man's statement of himself.—And on the day appointed, when Agrippa and Bernice were come, and with great pomp, had entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city; at Festus's commandment, Paul was brought forth. Festus first opened the business of the court, with telling Agrippa, and all those assembled, how the Jews, both at Jerusalem, and also at Cesarea, had demanded his life; saying, that he ought not to live any longer. But Festus declared, that having examined him, he found nothing worthy of death in him; but that he was now glad of the opportunity of bringing him before Agrippa. Then the king called upon the apostle, as is here set forth, to set up his defence. "Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself." Let the reader look at the prisoner in his chains, before the crowded assembly; and as was usual in those days, in public speakers, let him fancy he beholds him waving his hand, as if to thank his hearers for their courtesy in hearing, and bespeaking their candour, to what he had to deliver; and thus entering on the justification of his having professed faith in Christ, in direct opposition to all his former prejudices. Independent of divine truths, the whole

of the apostle's address is a masterly display of eloquence, in which every thing that is graceful and becoming is observed in all that Paul delivered, from beginning to end.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation, at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;

"Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a pharisee.

"And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our Fathers;

"Unto which promise, our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews." (Acts xxvi. 4—7.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I DO not think it necessary to go over the several parts, either of the history of Paul's conversion, or the apostle's views of that conversion; when, by recourse to the Scriptures, the reader will find the whole so very amply set forth. What I would more immediately beg to direct the attention to regard, in both, is, how very blessedly the Holy Ghost overruled all, and every part, to the divine glory; as decidedly showing in Paul's instance, the Almighty power of sovereign grace. Paul, thought nothing less than about himself, or about his defence. He wanted to hold up Christ, in his full, and finished salvation. As for himself, he desired to be kept in the back-ground of the piece. It was not, in Paul's view, worth a moment's consideration, what the whole party then before him thought of Paul; or of his having offended the Jews, in preaching Christ. But the great object he had in view, was, that in speaking of the abundant

grace shewn to him, the Lord, as he said to Timothy, "might in him shew forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Christ, also, to everlasting life."

Under this impression, the apostle began, first to shew his natural and original hatred to Christ, and his gospel; and from thence to prove, that being by nature and trainment, so deeply entrenched in his heart, against those divine truths which he now so cordially received and lived upon, nothing could be more decisive, in proof of what he asserted, that the change was wrought upon him, by the manifestation, made to him from heaven, of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And Paul appealed for the matter of fact respecting his former state and manner of life, to the whole nation of the Jews; (and probably some of them were now present;) that they not only knew him to be a staunch Jew, but living after the most straitest sect of that religion a pharisee. The question therefore naturally arose at such a representation, from whence then this wonderful change? The apostle answered: By a call from heaven. And how then, could he, or any man like him, so called, "be disobedient to the heavenly vision?"

Before I go farther, I would pause, and beg the reader to step aside for a moment, from the court of Agrippa, in testimony to the defence of the apostle; and "commune with his own heart, and search out his spirit." The miraculous manner which the Lord was pleased to make use of, in the conversion of the apostle Paul, is not to be brought forward in proof, as if the Lord called none from sin to salvation, but in the same way. This would be to make a wrong statement, and in direct opposition to what is delivered on the subject of regeneration in the word of God. Various are the ways, and workings, as recorded in holy Scripture, concerning the opera-

tions of grace, of our wonderful-working God. Some are called by solemn dispensations, from darkness to light; and others the Lord speaks of having drawn, as if "by the cords of a man, with bands of love." (Hosea xi. 4.) The jailor at Philippi appears to have been convulsed in soul, as well as terrified in body, by the earthquake, before his conversion. Whereas, in the same chapter, we read of a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, who appears to have passed from death to life without those terrors. All that is said on this subject is, "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." (Acts xvi. 13—34.) The conclusion therefore, which is to be made on scriptural grounds, concerning this vast and most important concern is this, that the grace itself of conversion is, and must be, shewn to every child of God, or there can be no entrance into the kingdom of heaven. But the method by which the mighty work is wrought, and which is wholly from God, may be accomplished according to his sovereign will and pleasure, by different instruments.

But what I particularly request also, every truly regenerated child of God, to observe with me, on this history of Paul, is this; that in every instance, where the saving work is wrought in the soul, like him, there will be, yea, there must be, a continual looking back, to admire and adore the distinguishing grace and love of God, in the act itself. Paul seemed to be at a loss for expressions to speak of it, as often as the marvellous event which he met with in the road to Damascus crossed his mind. "The grace of our Lord (said he) was exceeding abundant, with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. i. 14.) And surely Paul's history is not singular. Every son and daughter of Adam, when recovered by the Lord from the fallen, ruined, and sunken state of

nature's apostacy from God, will often look back, and ponder over the marvellous history of his own life. And this is what the Lord commanded the church, by the prophet, to do. "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock, whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit, whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." (Isa. li. 1, 2.) Observe, in this Scripture, the Lord not only commands the church to consider the wretched state of nature from whence the Lord calls his people, as from a stony, hard, impenetrable rock, which none but God can soften; and the hole of a pit, which is dark, and as a cistern, without water; but also the distinguishing nature of that grace, like that of Abraham; who, when there were numbers of idolaters like himself, all around him, yet to him alone the special grace was manifested. "Look (saith the Lord) to Abraham your father:" was there ever one more unpromising than he, as a father? For what could he have given birth to but idolatrous children, like himself, had I not called him? And Sarah, also, your mother, who was barren: what hope could there have been of any children, from a steril state, like hers? Doth the reader enter into the secret things of this blessed Scripture of our most gracious God? Then will he, I am sure, from the same divine teaching, learn also the blessedness of being enabled to do as the Lord hath said; look back, and review again and again, yea, continually, the wonderful mercy shewn to himself, as well as Paul; when in the several properties of grace, his soul is melted in the discovery. When I think, when, and where, and how, I stood, in the long days of my unregeneracy; sinning with an high hand, regardless and obdurate; deserving nothing

but wrath, while the Lord came forth in love; and meriting hell, when Jesus came to allure me to heaven. What grace was here!

Reader, can you find somewhat similar in your own history? are you called by sovereign grace, to the knowledge of the Lord? And do you recollect with whom you lived, and what where the circumstances of your family, in this season? The Lord said, by his servant the prophet, "I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." (Jer. iii. 14.) And hath the Lord done so by you? or are you now living among such as know not the Lord? Have you any brothers, or sisters; a father, or mother, in an unawakened state of nature? Are you a servant, or an apprentice, in a graceless family; and are you the one, the *only one*, taught by grace to call upon the Lord? What saith the reader to himself, on these questions? Oh! who is there that but knows this, feels this, and lives daily in the spiritual apprehension of this, but will fall down before God; and as he looks back, and reviews the wonderful way the Lord hath brought him, but will be constrained to cry out with the church: "Who remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth for ever!" (Psa. cxxxvi. 23.)

I detain the reader one moment longer, in this passage in Paul's defence, just to observe the masterly manner in which the apostle used his argument to repel the accusation of the Jews. "And now I stand (said Paul) and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers. Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come: for which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Was there ever an act of greater cruelty, injustice, and oppression, than for the Jews to attempt the death of Paul, in that he had asserted, that this very hope which they

professed to believe, Christ would accomplish. Now Agrippa himself was well acquainted with the religion of the Jews; some have said that he was a Jew. Be that as it may, his knowledge of their religion rendered him a proper person to be appealed to on the subject. And therefore, for the Jews to criminate Paul, for asserting the same truths as they themselves professed, only because he preached Christ, as the hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof, was enough to have convinced Agrippa, and the whole court, of the innocency of Paul, and the malice of his enemies.—Oh! how very blessed it is, to see how graciously the Lord watches over his people: and how the enemies of our God are made the unconscious instruments of accomplishing, at times, the very reverse of what they intend.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

"Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

"And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

"Whereupon, as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

"At mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

"And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

"And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

"But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee.

"Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts xxvi. 8—18.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I HAVE before observed, that I did not mean, when entering upon this most interesting record, of the conversion of the apostle Paul, to interrupt, but as little as possible, the thread of the history; or to intrude any remarks of mine, which would be as superfluous as unnecessary. Nothing can be added to the narration itself, to heighten its beauty, or in which it requires illustration. And if the Lord, the Spirit, be pleased to render it instrumental in his almighty hand, to do good to the souls of his people, which the repeated account given of it in the word of God should seem to be the evident design of it in the Lord's hand; the more simple it is received by the reader in the plain, unvarnished relation of Holy Scripture, the better. I only venture to call the reader's attention to one point, in all the preceding verses, in the present paragraph before him; and which is, in my view, so highly significant and striking, that I would beg to lay a strong emphasis upon it; namely, that when the Lord Jesus called to him from heaven, and called to him by name; and the man tremblingly alive said: Who art thou, Lord? our most adorable Lord revealed himself to him

by his most blessed name, Jesus. "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Had the Son of God said, as was most truly his name, also (and as he did to Moses, when the Lord first appeared to him) "I am the God of thy Father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" (Exod. iii. 6.) this proclamation, glorious as it would have been, and completely proving his GODHEAD, would not have carried conviction to the man's soul with half the force, as when he called himself Jesus. Nay, if Paul's spirit could have found confidence to have made an answer; from the hardness of his then stony heart, he might have said: True Lord, and I am not persecuting thee, nor thy cause; but I am aiming to extirpate the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and his followers, from the earth. But when the almighty voice declared that he who spake to Paul from heaven, and had struck him to the ground, and his whole company with him, was the Lord Jesus Christ himself, down fell at once all the weapons of opposition out of his hand; and the man himself lay trembling before the God whom he had so long and so awfully blasphemed; expecting, as he well might, that the next sound of that almighty voice, would have been heard by him, to sentence him to hell. And how blessedly doth our most glorious Lord here confirm his GODHEAD, at the same time, to all his people; when by thus calling from heaven, and calling himself by that precious name, which is above every name, testifying that he is one with the Father, over all, God, blessed for ever. Amen.

And let not the reader overlook the tenderness of Christ manifested to his people, at the same time, in the words which accompanied this call of the apostle. When Jesus said; "Why persecutest thou me?" as far as it had respect to Christ personal, Paul could not have been said to persecute him. But it

was in his people. And the Lord evidently declared thereby, that he takes part in all that concerns his members upon earth. "Whoso toucheth any of them, toucheth the apple of his eye." (Zech. ii. 8.) The head feels if the foot be crushed. And what can more strongly confirm the certainty of that most blessed doctrine, of the oneness between Christ and his people! What can more fully shew the unremitting watchfulness of the Lord's care over them! And what can be equally calculated to afford constant assurance to every individual member of Christ's mystical body; that the persons, and all the concerns of the Lord's people, are in the Lord's hands. Yea, part of himself: "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Eph. v. 30.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

"But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

"For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

"Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

"That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead; and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." (Acts xxvi. 19—23.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I SHALL observe the same paucity of remarks here, as I did on the preceding paragraph from Scripture. The beautiful relation, as it stands before us, needs

no comment. Let me only direct the reader's attention to the apostle's farther account, which he gave of this ordination, in his Epistle to the church of the Galatians; where, speaking of his obedience to the heavenly vision, in preaching Christ to the people, he thus stated his apostolical authority: "But I certify you brethren, (said he) that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. i. 11, 12.) And in the same chapter he pronounceth an anathema upon any one, and upon every one, who preacheth any other. "For though we, (said Paul, meaning himself, and his companions in the ministry,) or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." And he repeats the words a second time; as if to shew the church, that they were not hastily, or inadvertently spoken by him." (Gal. i. 8—12.) Now let the reader pause, and ask himself, what more undeniable proof can be given of the views which Paul had, both of the person, and glorious salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ? For, if he was never taught this gospel by man, but learnt it immediately from heaven, and from the Lord Jesus Christ himself; what form of words could he have used to say, that Christ was, and is, God.—Such views are at all times precious; and eminently so, in the present awful day, of a Christ despising generation. Well might the history, which follows the account of Paul's conversion, add, that when "he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God, all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name at Jerusalem? But he increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ." (Acts ix. 20—22.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said, with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

"But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

"For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him, for this thing was not done in a corner.

"King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a christian.

"And Paul said, I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether, such as I am, except these bonds." (Acts xxvi. 24—29.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It is worthy the reader's closest observation, that this interruption by Festus (as upon the former occasion, the like interruption to Paul's discourse by the Jews) began only when the apostle came to that part of his subject which spake of the complete redemption by Christ, and his opening the door of salvation to the Gentiles. In the former instance we are told, that the whole assembly gave audience to his word, until that Paul told them that the Lord Jesus said unto him: "I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." And then the Jews instantly broke out with clamour; saying, Away with such a fellow from the earth. (Acts xxii. 21, 22.) And here again, as soon as Paul had said that his preaching tended to nothing more than what "the prophets and Moses did say, that Christ should suffer, and be the first that should rise from the dead, and shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles;" Festus could

contain no longer. "Paul, (said he) thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad."

And let the reader say, (for to his own breast I refer the decision) are not these the very doctrines which at the present hour call forth the malice and hatred of all the carnal? Let the preachers among men confine themselves to moral essays, and pay compliments to human virtue, and the charities of life—all the world will listen to the syren song, and fancy themselves included in a plan of religion so suited to soothe the consciences of the unawakened, who live in admiration of themselves. But if the preacher holds forth what the word of God holds forth; that man, in his whole nature, is a fallen, sinful, lost, and ruined creature; and that his recovery is wholly in Christ; the pride of the human heart revolts at this, and it will be little less than declaring war with the world, "the preaching peace wholly by Jesus Christ." (Acts x. 36.)

And if I may, without giving offence, upon a subject of this nature, add a word more, I would say, that as the apostle brought upon himself the hatred, both of Jews and Gentiles, for asserting the sovereignty of God in making salvation the whole result of free grace; so in the present hour, to hold up God's distinguishing love to his people, in the choice of his church in Christ; this doctrine, as well with professors as profane, never fails to expose the preachers of it to the displeasure of both. For it is impossible it can be received by any, until the Lord, the Holy Ghost, hath convinced of sin, and brought the hearer of it under the conscious sense of the plague of his own heart; and he hath learnt at home, within himself, that soul-supporting doctrine, that salvation is wholly of Christ; and that "neither is there any other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.)

I beg the reader not to overlook the holy confidence with which Paul addressed himself before his audience. He knew the goodness of his cause, and therefore shrank from no man.—And observe, how the apostle speaks of his adorable Lord, and his glorious cause. "The king knoweth of these things, (said he) for none of these things could be hidden from him. For this thing was not done in a corner." A corner! the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the astonishing effects which followed in the descent of the Holy Ghost, qualifying the poor untutored fishermen of Galilee to preach and work miracles in the name of Christ, were as public as the shining of the sun at mid-day! So that Paul might, as he did, challenge the mind of Agrippa on the subject. And though Paul knew that the saving faith of those glorious truths could never be received into the human mind but by the divine operation of the Holy Ghost, yet the historical faith of them was too notorious in Jerusalem, and all the provinces of the Roman empire, to be doubted by any.

The answer of Agrippa, shews what a state of perturbation, mingled with fear, filled the poor man's mind. All his royalty, and all the pomp and pageantry of the court, could not compose him. He expressed what passed within, when observing the effect Paul's preaching had wrought: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a christian."

I pause here to remark, what a multitude of Agrippas every age hath furnished since the days of Paul. The *almost* christians meet us in every way; mingle up with every sect and profession in the world: they are found attending all ordinances and means of grace; having a name to live, but virtually dead before God. And though they are diversified in a number of different modes and pro-

fessions ; yet they are all classed under this one leading character ; unawakened, unregenerate, unrenewed. Born under the meridian of the gospel, where the religion of Christ is the standard and establishment of the nation, they are enlisted by nature at their birth in the same. But, never having been born of God, they are in the same state as nature found them ; and form a large battalion in the regiment of the *almost* christians.

And let me add one observation more on the subject of the *almost christian.* It appears that Agrippa had his fears that the reasoning and arguments of Paul might at length operate to his conversion. Poor man ! how totally ignorant was he of the necessity of Diviue teaching, for this purpose. But such is the apprehension of all carnal men of the present hour. They are not aware, that the conviction of the true knowledge of Christ is not of the head, but of the heart. All the reasonings and arguments of men, void of divine grace, cannot but end where they began. What is formed in nature will terminate in nature. The foolish virgins in the parable were of the *almost* christians ; that is, they had the lamp of a profession, but no oil of grace to give light. Hence, when the midnight hour came, though they made pretence to go forth to meet the bridegroom, their lamps were gone out, and they found no entrance into his kingdom, " for the door was shut." (Matt. xxv. 10.) An *almost* christian is no christian at all. He entereth not by the door into the sheepfold. He is not brought into the kingdom of grace by regeneration. And whatever he meets with in life, to persuade him *almost* to be a christian, he is never any thing more so, than by name. The Holy Ghost, by his servant the prophet, hath drawn the portrait of all such characters with his divine pencil ; and there is one and the same feature, which denotes the

whole family: "Son of man, (said the Lord to the prophet,) the children of thy people are talking one to another, and saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that eometh forth from the Lord. And they eome unto thee as the people eometh, and they sit before thee as my people; and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." (Ezek. xxxiii. 30, 31.)

As a contrast to Agrippa, and the whole phalanx of this army of the *almost* christians, in every age, it is blessed to observe in the character of all those who are not *almost*, but altogether, christians, how they are marked by the new and spiritual life. The apostle felt sueh a zeal for the glorious cause of his most glorious Lord, that he wished that not only Agrippa but all that heard him, were truly become real christians, by sovereign graee. His answer to Agrippa is most striking to this purport. "I would to God, (said Paul,) that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether, such as I am, except these bonds." I pray the reader to observe the ardent zeal of the apostle, and also the charity and affection of the man. Paul knew the happiness of his own mind; and therefore to the greatest enemy he had, he could wish no happier situation than his own, excepting the ehains with which he then stood bound. Since he had known Christ, he felt and enjoyed the truth in his own life, of what he afterwards wrote to his beloved Timothy; "that godliness is profitable unto all things; having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. iv. 8.)

I cannot dismiss this part of Paul's history, before that I have ealled upon the reader, once more, to

stand with me, and contemplate in imagination this interesting scene, of the apostle pleading before Agrippa, on the interesting subject of his conversion. I would pray the reader to figure to himself, in idea, this numerous assembly. Let him behold Agrippa, and Festus, and Bernice, seated on their thrones of eminence, surrounded by a vast multitude; many, no doubt, attracted by curiosity, to hear the trial of the apostle, and Paul standing before their high mightinesses, (as they considered themselves,) in chains, to answer for his life. Here we see fulfilled, what the apostle elsewhere said, "We are (said he) made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men." (1 Cor. iv. 9.)

Let the reader figure, in imagination, to himself this scene.—And then let him suppose such a spectacle, as Paul calls it, under the survey of angels. What a reverse of circumstances then may we suppose appeared to angelic inspection, compared to the misguided apprehension of human spectators. Surely, no object on earth could have been as dignified as Paul; and none greater objects of contempt than Festus and his company. Spiritually beheld, it was not Paul in chains, but Agrippa; and the whole assembly of the *almost* christians, like himself. Robed as they appeared to be to the carnal eye; they literally were at the very moment, in the chains of sin and death, and prisoners to Satan. Whereas Paul had on the robes of Jesu's righteousness; and as the Son had made him free, he was free indeed. (John viii. 36.) Oh! what mistaken calculations do men make, when to their dazzled eyes they see things through a false glare! How utterly foreign to the divine view of him, "who seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." (1 Sam. xvi. 7.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them.

"And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

"Then said Agrippa unto Festus, this man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar." (Acts xxvi. 30—32.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

And here we come to the close of the history. The Sessions were over. The court is broken up. And, as the several grandees of the assembly thought, the whole business were ended. Agrippa's curiosity, with multitudes beside, had been gratified. Festus now supposed he had some better pretext than he had before, (see the two last verses of the preceding chapter,) of sending Paul before the Roman emperor. And the apostle is led back to his prison. Agrippa, indeed, (very charitably as he thought) observed, "that this man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Cæsar." But not so, Agrippa. This could not be. The Lord, who, in his over-ruling providence, for his own glory, and the honour of his servant, had brought him twice before in a state of bondage, for preaching the history of his conversion, now, through the same instrumentality, and for the same great cause, had appointed to bring him to bear witness also of the same at Rome. (See Acts xxiii. 11.)

But how little did the several actors in this scene apprehend what had been doing that day; and to what purpose the whole party had been assembled. The meeting was indeed over; and the solemn subject

brought before them, they would hear no more. But a rehearsing of the effects, how utterly unconscious were any of them of such an event; and that they would be brought forward in trembling characters, at the door of every individual, which that day had heard Paul's account of his conversion; with a demand, with whom it had been "the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death?" And what a sequel may we suppose to have followed to the Agrippa's, the Festus's, and the Bernice's, in the after events of their lives; among whom, the effects made on their minds of Paul's conversion, became no other than like impressions made on the water! In how many instances were fulfilled those solemn words of Christ: "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day." (John xii. 48.)

But turning from characters so truly awful; may we not hope that many of the Lord's people were in the throng, whom sovereign and distinguishing grace had brought there that day, for the most blessed of all purposes; to hear in Paul's relation of himself, of the ways and works of God in the calling of his redeemed; and whose conversion to the Lord's hand became instrumental, by the same Almighty power, to their own! Nay, to go farther; may we not hope, that not only to many that were then present and heard for themselves; but to many others which were not present; but to whom the wonderful relation was made, after this assembly had broken up, and the concourse that met were scattered in various directions, far and near, it became a mercy?—Who shall calculate the effect wrought in towns, and houses, and families, to which the followers of Agrippa, at his return to his kingdom, and in the provinces around could not but report so miraculous an history, as the Lord calling to Paul from heaven; and thereby converting the most bigoted Jew, to the most

zealous and faithful christian ? Still prosecuting the subject, through all the intermediate ages of the church, to the present hour; may we not hope, that from the rehearsal of it by the Scriptures, in churches and families; and among all ranks and orders of people; daily blessings result from it? What arithmetic, indeed can be found to ascertain the exact extent of its usefulness, in those instances where the Lord the Spirit hath seen it accompanied with his enlightening grace? Yea, to ages yet unborn, the wonderful relation will descend; and as long as the Scriptures remain, the conversion of Paul will bear a prominent part in them; and under the divine teaching, be productive of incalculable blessings, in making "wise unto salvation, through the faith which is in Christ Jesus!"

But I fear I have dwelt too long on the subject, in that part of it as it refers to Agrippa, and his company; if the reader hath not therefrom been continually led all the way as we passed through the history *then,* to connect with it the interest we have in it *now,* surely, every line, every word, in the account of Paul's conversion, speaks in a loud voice to the church, in relation to the conversion of sinners in all ages. The repeated record the Holy Ghost hath made of it; and the conclusion the same Almighty God taught Paul to make of it; become the most decided testimonies to this end. "Howbeit, for this cause (said the apostle) I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." (1 Tim. i. 16.)

And Paul called to mind also the unprovoked cruelty he had exercised towards the followers of Christ; and the hatred he had shewn to the person of Christ; and these considerations heightened to his

view the mercy shewn him; so that he considered that there could not be a case under heaven more exceptionable than his own was; when the Lord Jesus called him by his grace. Hence under the impression he said: "This is a faithful saying, and and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Tim. i. 15.) As if Paul had said, there can be no cause for despondency, or depair in any, and every instance, where the heart of a sinner is broken, under the sense of sin; since I, the chief of sinners, have obtained mercy. And let all who hear, or read my history, pause over it, and mark well the several features of it. I was a *blasphemer*, a *persecutor*, and *injurious!* And yet, in the very moment of my mad career, I was called by sovereign grace, to the knowledge of the Lord. Surely, the common corruptions of a fallen nature never broke out in worse characters than mine. I was blaspheming Christ; persecuting his members; compelling them to blaspheme; pursuing them with hatred to destroy them, even to strange cities; and when the blood of Stephen, a martyr for Christ, was shed, "I was standing by, consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." (Acts xxii.) If then, I, the chief of sinners, obtained mercy, who can despair of the rich, free, and sovereign grace, of the Lord Jesus Christ!

We shall do well, not to pass hastily away from the contemplation of a subject so highly interesting. Evidently, it is the Lord's intention, from having caused it to be so frequently made the subject of the sacred Scriptures, that his people should frequently ponder over an history so astonishingly great and unexpected in its nature, as is the conversion of Paul; and in its eventual consequences so highly encouraging to the distressing apprehension of sin-

ners, who are sometimes driven to fear they have exceeded the possibility of pardon. The Lord therefore, hath not only made proclamation in his holy word, throughout both volumes of Scripture, of the extensiveness of his grace, in pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin; but in the example of the recovery of the chiefest of sinners, hath illustrated also the glorious truth, in the most sovereign display of it. We are called upon to attend to the most striking similitudes in all the works of nature, wherein the Lord makes representation to his more astonishing acts of grace. Sometimes to consider the vast abyss of the congregated waters of the ocean; in which, if the loftiest mountain of the earth were cast it would be lost to sight. So the Lord speaks in relation to sin; and hence the prophet exclaims, in the contemplation: "Who is a God, like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again. He will have compassion upon us. He will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah vii. 18, 19.) And sometimes the Lord illustrates the sovereignty of his grace, by a comparison taken from the highest heavens; and saith: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways; and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. lv. 7, 9.)

And as by similitudes of this magnificient nature, the Lord proclaims his mercy: so by real instances,

in the recovery of the most flagitious of sinners, the Lord hath manifested the same. I have not limits left me to enlarge, by an enumeration of the several histories which the word of God hath recorded, and held forth to the church by way of encouragement in this particular; yet will I advert to one, which the Old Testament exhibits to us as striking and as consolatory, as the one which we have been looking at under the New; I mean the instance of *Manasseh;* than which nothing can be more pointed in illustration of the sovereignty of grace.

The history of Manasseh is short, in relation to his recovery by grace; but long, in relation to his sin; for it is said, that he was but twelve years old when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. Through the greater part of this time, he lived in the most awful state of transgression before God, and to man. I refer the reader to the Scriptures, for an account. We have it first recorded, 2 Kings xxi. And a duplicate of the same, 2 Chron. xxxiii. Happy for the church, the Holy Ghost hath also related in the same Scripture, the account of his recovery by grace. He stands forth therefore, as is designed by the Lord, a monument of sin, and of sovereign mercy; and thereby becomes a full confirmation of the whole tenor of Scripture, and of that momentous truth, when it is said, that "where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. v. 20, 21.)

I can never sufficiently entreat the church of our most glorious Christ to ponder well these things; neither can I use arguments sufficiently strong and expressive to shew the vast and infinite importance of them. For it is, to the light and superficial im-

pression men receive of sin, and its baleful malignity, must be ascribed, and can only be ascribed, the light regard they have to the person and redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas, if in the account of one man, whether Paul, or Manasseh, as seen in a state of nature, we behold the portrait of all; and stood convinced, that the being of sin, and the very essence and inherency of sin, is the state of every son and daughter of Adam, by the fall; such a view, taught of the Lord, would induce corresponding affections in the heart; and the consequence, through grace, would be, to have the lowest apprehension of ourselves, and the highest affection to the person and redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ. But the discovery both of the ruin, and the remedy, can only come from God.

I have just room to add a short conclusion from the whole; namely, to bless God, in his Trinity of persons, for such "abundant grace, (as Paul, calls it,) shewn to him, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." I would desire also, to bless God the Holy Ghost for having made the record of it to have been *thrice* repeated in his holy Scriptures; and for having caused the memoir to be handed down with such gracious testimony, to the present hour. And I would humbly look up to the God of all grace, that the Lord may bless it and continue to bless it, to the latest period of the church, as he hath in the several ages that are past; and cause it to be a sweet savour in the souls of his people, to numbers now on earth; yea, and to many yet unborn; as it hath comforted and refreshed the souls of numbers, which are now in heaven. Amen.

# ONESIMUS,

## *THE RUN-AWAY SERVANT,*

## RETURNED TO HIS MASTER.

### HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon, our dearly beloved, and fellow-labourer;

"And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus, our fellow-soldier; and to the church in thy house:

"Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1, 2, 3.)

### NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

Perhaps, in all the annals of history, and amidst all the variety of correspondences which have been carried on by individuals, or by communities, from one generation to another, there never hath been a more sweet, simple, and unaffected, form of letter-writing, (and independent of the inspiration which shines in the several sentences) than what is contained in this Epistle of the apostle Paul to his dearly beloved Philemon. And, if it were not where it is, (as I have elsewhere remarked, in my "Poor Man's Commentary,") folded up in the sacred pages of divine truths, it would be classed among the first productions of nature; be carefully deposited in every museum of literature, and recommended by all

the admirers of the fine arts, as the most correct standard of letters. But while this view of the Epistle becomes matter of reproach on this ground, to such as despise or overlook its beauties, merely because it is Scripture; there is yet an infinitely higher cause for which the church of God prizeth it; namely for its spiritual contents. And had not the subject of it been considered by the Almighty Author of inspiration as of great importance to the church; it never would have formed a part in the sacred canon; neither have been so carefully preserved among the records of the divine treasury; and handed down, as it hath been, to the present hour, as a blessed portion of God's holy word, "to make wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus."

The leading purport of this Epistle, from Paul to Philemon, appears to have been principally to this design. Onesimus, a servant of Philemon, in the former part of his life, had been unfaithful to his master; and, as it should seem from certain expressions here and there in Paul's letter, had fraudulently taken his goods, and run away from his service. In his wandering, the God of all grace in his providence so ordered it, that his steps were directed to Rome; where Paul at that time was. And though the apostle was a prisoner for the cause of Christ; yet, as we read, in the book of the Acts, he dwelt in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ; with all confidence, no man forbidding him. (Acts xxviii. 30, 31.) To this ministry of the apostle Onesimus was brought. And the Lord blessed the word to his conversion. And thus, that precious promise of the Lord, in this man's instance, as in numberless others, was graciously fulfilled: "And

I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." (Isa. xliii. 16.)

When this event was made known to Paul, and together with it the history of Onesimus, being a run-away servant, and having purloined his master's goods, the apostle determined that he should return. And Philemon being well known to Paul, and well beloved by him, (the Lord having made the apostle instrumental also to his conversion, as well as to his servant) he availed himself of this influence, and sent him home, accompanied with this Epistle. I shall not anticipate the contents of it, because they will more properly meet us in the several features of the history as we pass on. Yet thus far I may *now* venture to observe, that never could motives of a more endearing and conciliating nature have been made use of for the occasion, than Paul adopted. He heaped one argument upon another, to win the affection of Philemon, and concluded the burden of his request with observing, that the kindness shewn to Onesimus he would esteem as done to himself.

These are the outlines of the epistle, as far as relates to the case of Onesimus. But the manner in which Paul opens his subject, and his connecting with it his usual salutation to the church of God, as uniformly observed in all the momentous writings of inspiration, the Lord the Spirit was pleased to make use of by his pen, evidently shews that the Lord had other designs of benefit to his church from this epistle. It will be our happiness to learn what they are. And as it hath been made blessed to others, it may be useful in the present instance to us also; to the divine glory, and our spiritual improvement in Jesus Christ.

And here, in the opening of our subject, I cannot

but pause, to admire the very triumphant manner in which the apostle endears himself to Philemon, when calling himself "the prisoner of Jesus Christ." Paul evidently delighted in his captivity to Christ. *Three times*, in this short epistle, he mentions it. And in other of his inspired writings he dwells upon it. (Eph. iii. 1. iv. 1. Col. iv. 10.) And to his beloved son Timothy he thus writes: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner." (2 Tim. i. 8.) I know not whether the reader enters into a scriptural and spiritual apprehension of this honourable distinction. But it is an highly dignified title. The Lord Jesus had taken Paul, as he doth all his mystical members, into such a oneness with himself, that Paul considered himself as no longer his own. He is a prisoner of Christ. But the Lord's chains Paul found to be golden chains. He therefore followed after Christ; because (said he) "the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge; that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. v. 14, 15.) In the history given us of the martyrs, we find some of them calling their chains *bracelets;* and like Moses, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." (Heb. xi. 26.) When Ludovicus Marsacus, one of the noblemen of France, was brought forth for execution among the other christians which suffered for the true faith in the awful persecution of that day, the keeper of the prison, out of respect to his rank and dignity, did not bind him with fetters. Upon which he cried out, as being hurt by the distinction: "Why do you not honour me with a chain, for Christ also; and create me a knight of that illustrious Order?"

It is not the common lot of all the Lord's chosen ones, to pass from this world to another, in the red blood of martyrdom; but it is the privilege of all to know themselves Christ's prisoners. And the highest enjoyment of every redeemed and regenerated child of God, is to be, as Paul tells us he was, "to follow after, if to apprehend that (said he) for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." (Philip. iii. 12.)

And these are often made blessed seasons of captivity in Christ, when the Lord confines to the bed of sickness; or withdraws his people for a while from men, in order for the more sweet and sacred manifestations from the Lord. We should lose many a visit from his princely Majesty, if, as the Lord's prisoners, we were not shut up from the world, and the world was not shut out from us. Perhaps no seasons are so blessedly calculated for enjoying sweet communion with God, as those are. The grand secret of our holy faith is, to know that the Lord is always the same, near us; but the noise and distraction of life deaden our apprehensions of his presence. (Isa. xxvii. 3.) There is to our view a hedge between him and us, that we do not see our love. "He standeth, (as the spouse expresseth it) behind our wall; he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice." (Song ii. 9.) But these views of him shew they are indistinct. Very blessed is it when he lifts up the sash, and throweth open the windows, and maketh himself manifest, "otherwise than he doeth to the world." (John xiv. 22.)

The salutation of the apostle is very gracious. He joins in it Timothy, whom he calls brother. Not that Timothy was his brother, in the common charities of life in nature, but in the higher relationship of grace; and perhaps also he meant, as a brother labourer; for so he was, in the gospel of Christ. So that Paul

and Timothy, joining together, as one in Christ, in this Epistle; gave a greater weight to the subject, for which he wrote. And the same holds good with respect to those to whom the Epistle is directed. For the apostle joins it with "Philemon: Apphia, and Archippus, fellow soldier; and to the church in Philemon's house." I pass by the several features of *fellow labourers,* and *fellow soldiers,* to attend to the one more general feature, of what Paul calls, "the church of God, in his house." For this opens to a subject more generally interesting.

The imagination cannot form to itself an object of equal moment, with that of a church of God in a house, and family.—And to shew the infinite importance and dignity of it, we have only to call to mind the very striking manner of expression, which the Lord Jesus Christ himself made use of, when he sent his disciples forth to preach his gospel. "Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house! And if the Son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it; if not, it shall turn to you again." (Luke x. 5, 6.) These words are not simply wishing peace; but it is in fact, saying it; for if there be one of Christ's there, who, as a son of peace, hath found peace in the blood of the cross; this were to greet him in the Lord's name; but if there be none of Christ's there, the blessing is too costly to be thrown away or lost; it "shall return (saith Christ) to you again."

How is it that this spiritual salutation is so little known, and less practised in the present day? Evidently, from the feeble and languishing state of spiritual communion among the Lord's people. Certainly, if the church of our most glorious Christ was living more upon Christ; enjoying more spiritual communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, would not the Lord's people carry the blessed effects of it more into common life?—If, as our Lord saith,

"out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" would not the overflowings of the heart, sometimes, and not unfrequently, appear in spiritual conversation?—And let the reader, if he be one whom the Lord hath called with "an holy calling," figure to himself a conduct like this, marking the whole features of the life and conversation, in gracious salutations. Let him suppose, a redeemed and regenerated child of God, thus entering an house or family, with these impressions on his mind; namely, the blessedness of which he himself is a partaker, of the everlasting love of God, the Father, in having chosen him in Christ, and given him to Christ, before the foundation of the world! Let him connect with it the everlasting love of God, the Son, having betrothed the church to himself, in the same moment, for ever; and having redeemed her in the time-state, from the evils of the fall. Let him also call to mind the everlasting love of God, the Holy Ghost, in having, in the ancient settlements of eternity, when the Father chose the church, and the Son married the church, knit together, and anointed the whole mystical body, both head and members in one; and with these impressions on his mind, as he enters an house or family, (feeling the blessedness of these unspeakable mercies in himself, as being a partaker of them,) will he not be led therefrom to say, If there be any here of this my Lord's family, peace be with him; I greet him as a brother, in the name of the Lord! Very blessedly to this amount speaketh the Lord Jesus to his church:—"Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey-comb; honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon." (Song iv. 11.) Intimating, that the lips are the movers, to express what worketh within; and is rising uppermost in the heart. And as the honey-comb is continually dropping its sweetness without pressure, and

without constraint; but free and spontaneous; so the lips of the Lord's people are for ever speaking sweet things, to the purport of edification and comfort; and especially in breathing good will and love to the church, and every individual of the Lord's family.

To all such the apostle's salutation is directed, as well as to Philemon, and to Apphia, and Archippus, and to the church of God in Philemon's house. "Grace to you, and peace, from God our father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." I need not enlarge on these well known blessings of the gospel of Christ. *Grace* is the free favour of God; and *peace* is the fruit and effect of that grace: and both are here given in an apostolical way; not simply as praying for them; but as already given and confirmed in Christ. For, as the Holy Ghost saith by Paul when speaking of the "saving and calling of the church with an holy calling; it is, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. i. 9.)

But before we prosecute the great and leading point of this Epistle, I would detain the reader for a moment, to consider yet a little more fully, the very great blessedness of what the apostle calls "the church of God in an house." Wherever one of Christ's little ones is, there is Christ. And however humble in station, or low in intellect, or natural endowments, such an one may be; yet he sanctifieth the house. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (1 Cor. v. 6.) This was early preached to the church, under the figure of the *first sheaf* of the harvest; and the *wave loaves,* to present before the Lord. (See Lev. xxiii. 10—20.) And as this evidently pointed to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, (who is the sole sanctification of his people,) so every member of his, when called by sovereign grace, is thereby proved to be in the same sheaf

with Christ, the first fruits. Hence Paul, speaking of the household of Stephanas, calls it the "first fruits of Achaia." (1 Cor. xvi. 15.) What a dignity this, beyond all the titled honours among men! But farther. Grace, in one of a family, not only manifests that Christ dwells in that house, in that one of his, in the family; but also brings blessings in a thousand circumstances of good; of which the graceless part are unconscious. Indeed, as far back as the days of Joseph, we read, that his Master, the Egyptian, "saw that the Lord was with him; and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand." (Gen. xxxix. 3.) But this discernment, was only in a way of providence. Who can calculate, what numberless blessings follow, from the Lord's blessing that house and family, where any of his chosen ones dwell, in a way of grace! No doubt, were it discoverable, it would be found, that in all the ages of the church, where the Lord's people dwell, there are continual blessings from the Lord's beholding his chosen in Christ; and as it is said of the house of Obededom, "the Lord blessed the house of Obededom, and all that pertained unto him, because of the ark of God." (2 Sam. vi. 11, 12.)

And it is in this sense the words of the Holy Ghost, by Paul, are to be understood in relation to families: "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband, that believeth not, and he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else, were your children unclean, but now they are holy." (1 Cor. vii. 12—14.) No doubt, in the primary sense of this Scripture, the cases here stated had reference to the intermediate marriages, which sometimes took place between the seed of Israel and the Gentiles.

But the words are not so limited as not to hold forth very interesting instructions to the church of God in all ages. In all instances where either one of the parties in lawful wedlock is an unbeliever, and the other a believer; the unbeliever enjoys a certain blessing from being united to one that believes; that is, who by regeneration is manifestly a child of God. For, though the unbeliever is not made holy, or regenerated, because the partner is; (for this regeneration, in either case, is solely the work and gift of God, independent of all human means) yet, there is by so much, a blessing in that alliance, in which there is one of the Lord's chosen ones. So that the unbeliever, whether the man or the woman, is in this sense sanctified; that is, not made holy, (as we remarked before) but by union with one, that is, brought into such privileges as even now produce much benefit; and, under the divine blessing, may ultimately lead to greater good. And this is farther confirmed, by what follows in this same Scripture: "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" (1 Cor. vii. 16.) Who shall say, what may not at length result from this dwelling together, if the Lord should so over-rule it that the unbelieving husband, beholding the blessed effects of grace in the love and affection of his wife, they may be rendered instrumental in the Lord's hand, to the saving of his soul? And so in the other case, of an unbelieving wife, the like may follow. For, surely the same Almighty God, the Spirit, who called the *one*, is able to call the *other;* and the same sovereign grace, which alone could subdue the unbelief in the instance of the husband, is competent to work the same sovereign act of grace in the wife. And hence, that gracious direction of the Holy Ghost, by Peter: "Ye wives, (said the apostle) be in subjection

to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they also may, without the word, be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation, coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on apparel. But let it be the hidden man of the heart: in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Peter iii. 1—4.)

I must not overlook that other observation, in this Scripture, respecting the husband, if believing, *sanctifying* the wife; or the wife if believing *sanctifying* the husband; in that it is said, "else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." These expressions are not used to intimate, as if the children of parents, descending from the one a believer, and the other not, were either unclean or holy from what is derived by them from nature. For all the descendants of Adam are by nature alike unclean and unholy. For, of the whole race, it is expressly said; "There is none righteous; no not one." (Rom. iii. 10. Psalm xiv. 3.) Neither doth this Scripture mean, (as hath been thought) that if, in either case, the father or the mother of the children was an unbeliever, the wedlock was not legal; and therefore the children were unclean. For the Holy Ghost is speaking of the married state, where both husband and wife were rereived as such in lawful wedlock. But the expressions *unclean*, and *holy*, in relation to children so born, meant to shew, that as Israel, and the seed of Israel, by virtue of God's covenant, were an *holy people*, as set apart from the nations which were called *unclean*; the *one* parent being a believer, sanctified in this sense the *other*; and the marriage itself, being an ordinance chosen and appointed of God, and as such lawful; rendered the offspring *legally* holy; but the

*real* and *personal holiness* of all children so born, depending wholly in the after stage of life, to the sole work of regeneration, by the Spirit. (John iii. 5—7.)

If I have been somewhat longer than usual in this exordium, I hope to be forgiven. It appeared to me to be intimately connected with the subject itself, in relation to so important a point, as the proper apprehension of the church of God, in an house or family. The sending back this run-away servant, Onesimus, to his master, certainly had this, as a great object in view, by the apostle. And having thus paved the way, we shall now proceed to the subject itself; according to the Scripture which follows.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers.

"Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints.

"For we have great joy and consolation in thy love; because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee brother." (Phil. 4, 5. 7.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

What a beautiful representation doth God the Holy Ghost set before the church, when at any time in his divine word he brings forth to our view his servants on their knees, before the Lord! And still more gracious is the sight, when in his infinite condescension, we are made acquainted with the immediate subject of their errands before the throne! The apostle was eminently blessed in this employment.

For, notwithstanding that which came upon him daily, "the care of all the churches;" and amidst much public preaching, and the visitation of the Lord's people, in private inquiries into the state of their souls; he found time for continual communion with the Lord in retirement. Surely, he must have been well known, and well received, at the heavenly court; for we find him a constant hanger on there. No doubt, in following the steps of his adorable Lord, he took from the sleep of the night, to fill in what became essential, for the soul's welfare, both for himself and the Lord's people; and what an unceasing attention to the church would not permit, through the day. When we read of the letters of the apostle, in his preachings, and his numerous epistles to the several churches; we might be led to conclude that his whole life was filled in with his public ministry. But when we observe, how many and how frequent his prayers for the Lord's people were; we might conclude that great part of his time was spent in private communion with the Lord.

I pray the reader to remark with me also what the apostle observed in this epistle to Philemon; namely, that his prayers and thanksgivings for him, were *always*, and *personal*. "I thank my God, (said he) making mention of thee always in my prayers." It is a true evidence that we really take interest in the concerns of both the church of Christ, and of the people of Christ, when our prayers are continual. And this is in conformity to what our adorable Lord taught, on the subject of prayer. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." (Luke xviii.) By which our most glorious Christ doth not merely insist upon the necessity and importance of prayer; for the Lord's people are considered as a praying people; (Psalm xxvii. 8.) but it is the preseverance, and reiteration of prayer; in having carried in our supplications be-

fore the throne, we follow them up in unceasing applications for gracious answers. And what our Lord, elsewhere, more fully explains; when he said, "Watch and pray." (Mark xiv. 38.) Such an importunity as proves the pleader is in earnest; and like the patriarch, will not leave the mercy seat without a blessing." (Gen. xxxii. 26.) This is in Paul's sense to be *always* in prayer. And the mentioning the person for whom we pray, is to the same amount; "making mention of thee, (said he) always in my prayers." And to be sure, if the spiritual interests of the Lord's people were dear to Paul, as that they evidently were, general prayers could not comprise the special and personal cases, and wants, of every one individually considered. Paul felt what every faithful minister of Christ cannot but feel, that all he hath, and all he is; his scriptural, spiritual knowledge, gifts, exercises, comforts, are not simply for himself only, but for the benefit of the Lord's people; and in all that he is brought acquainted with, in their circumstances, he, like Paul, makes mention of their persons, and their state, *always* before the Lord. And indeed, though I know not how it is with others; yet, I find it good, when at any time before the throne, in bringing the Lord's whole body, the church, before the Lord, for his blessing: if the person, and special circumstances, of any one or more of the Lord's people, come into my remembrance. I consider this as the gracious act of God, the Holy Ghost, the teacher of prayer, in the hearts of the Lord's people;" (Rom. viii. 26, 27.) and to bring their case before the Lord; and I not only follow, but have repeatedly done it; and in numberless instances, felt the blessedness of it.

But I can no longer refrain from losing sight of Paul, to look at Paul's master. For, while we behold with such pleasure the earnestness of the apostle;

who but must be overwhelmed in the contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ. If Paul was frequent at the mercy seat, and made mention of the Lord's faithful ones in his prayers; what ought to be our spiritual joy, in beholding him, who is in the midst of the throne, and carrying on the interests of his redeemed with unremitting attention there. While upon earth, the day was wholly spent in the exercise of his public ministry; going about doing good; and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease, among the people; and at night, the stars in their courses witnessed his unceasing communion with his Father, for the everlasting interests of his church and people. And what is it now in heaven? Still carrying on the same gracious design. Jesus bears the names, the persons, the every concern of his redeemed, in remembrance before his Father; and like the High Priest of old, who represented him, in all his priestly office; in having the names of the twelve tribes of Israel engraven on his breast-plate; so Jesus, in reality, hath all, and every individual of them, on his breast, and in his heart. The reader will do well, (if peradventure, he knows the Lord) to have this view of our most glorious Christ, always in remembrance. And if Paul thought to strengthen his application to Philemon, (as no doubt he did) in favour of his run away-servant, when sending him back to his master, by telling him how unceasingly he made mention of him in his prayers to God; what may not the Lord's people expect, from being always remembered by the Lord himself, in all their wants and exercises! Methinks, I would have every redeemed and regenerated child of God take all the confidence, from such a view of our most glorious Christ, upon his throne, as the blessed truth affords. And it is a thought enough to animate and raise up the most sorrowful heart, that when you and I are not even praying for ourselves,

and feel no life and energy to prayer, there is One on the throne whom the Father heareth alway. He calleth all his *own* by name: knoweth all their persons; all their diversified cases, and circumstances; hath loved them, and doth love them, "with an everlasting love;" and is able "to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. vii. 25.)

But let us prosecute farther the subject of Paul's epistle to Philemon. The cause for the apostle's unceasing thankfulness to God comes next to be considered. "Hearing (saith he) of thy love and faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints." I pray the reader to observe, how beautifully the love of the saints is blended with the love of God; or rather is made the consequence of it. The love which is from God, and begins in God, must of necessity be accompanied with good will towards men. And I detain the reader for a moment, to consider the vast importance of it; for I venture to express my fears (though it is of the highest moment for all spiritual enjoyment to the saints of God,) that it is not so frequent in the remembrance, and even less in the practice of the Lord's people. The love and faith Paul speaks of, which Philemon enjoyed, was wholly the Lord's gift, and which, as from a fountain, gave forth all the streams that followed, to "make glad the city of God." And if the Lord's people were to accustom themselves, upon the reception of every blessing the Lord bestows upon them, to run it up to this source, how small soever the blessing or gift might be in itself; yet, as coming from the same divine love which gives the largest gifts, they would then discover it to be part of the same. For the Lord's love is not ot be valued either by the greatness, or the smallness of those gifts in providence or grace which we receive, but by the love of God which accompanies it;

and from whence all comes. So that by measuring all by this standard, we connect the whole in one chain, in all the blessings of time, and the blessings of eternity; and thereby enjoy a double sweetness in every one; first of the Lord himself, and secondly in his gift. And this opens, and keeps open, a never-failing source of the purest spiritual enjoyment the regenerated soul is capable of having here below; and which can only be made more complete, and full, and copious, from our more ripened faculties, in open vision in the world to come. This is what is so sweetly and blessedly expressed in the word of God. "To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.' (Psalm lxiii. 2, 3.)

I will detain the reader with one observation more on this portion of Paul's Epistle to Philemon: I mean that part in which he saith: "We have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother!" Here is much more in these words than at first view may strike the reader. It is not simply meant to say, that Philemon's charity to the poor saints in alms-giving had been refreshing to them; but somewhat more is intended. The *bowels* of the saints refreshed by a brother, refers to matters more of a spiritual, than of a temporal nature. The word for *bowels*, which is used here, is the same which is frequently applied to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. "I have compassion (said Jesus) on the multitude." (Mark viii. 2.) The real word translated *compassion*, is *bowels*. So again (Luke i. 7, 8.) "Through the tender mercy of our God," the words are, "the tender bowels of our God." And the very great tenderness of the expression lies in this; it is not the *gifts* or *graces* of the Lord, bestowed upon his people, that it is meant to say; for these

flow from God; but it is in God, yea God himself; his bowels, his very nature. Hence, Christ said, (Psalm xl. 8.) "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." Margin of the Bible renders it *within my bowels!* that is, it is in my very nature and being. Christ is said to "dwell in the hearts of his people by faith." (Eph. iii. 17.) But this is a perfectly distinct thing from being in the *very nature.* Hence, when Paul speaks of the bowels of the saints being refreshed by Philemon, as a brother, it was intended to intimate, that the refreshing was, and is, from the Lord, and the bowels of Christ, through Philemon's instrumentality, refreshed the bowels of his saints. And herein was found the true spiritual refreshment. For unless it came from Christ, it would not lead to Christ. For had it been wholly from Philemon, and his liberality, it would have imbibed a tang or taint, from the creature; and the refreshment from the Lord had not been seen in it or enjoyed. Hence, that very sweet and precious Scripture of the Lord, which he saith will be spoken by him at the last day to the saints of God, which have refreshed the bowels of his saints: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matt. xxv.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ, to enjoin thee that which is convenient,

"Yet for love's sake, I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ:

"I beseech thee, for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

"Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me." (Phil. 8—11.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The apostle having, in so tender and winning a manner, endeavoured to arrest both the attention, and to call up all the finer feelings of the heart of Philemon, toward the object to which he wished to conciliate his affection; in those verses, he enters more immediately on the subject of his epistle. And I cannot but admire the manner, as well as the several arguments, which he used upon the occasion. He first gently hints the character he had sustained as an apostle of Christ, which might impose by authority; but as instantly waves all claim on that ground, confining himself wholly to the bands of love, and heightening such claims with the double tie, that he was not only Paul, his friend, but Paul the aged; and now also the *prisoner* of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost, if one may presume so to speak, delights in scenes of this nature. He loves to set forth to the church the pleadings both of nature and of grace, in very many examples in Scripture history of the Lord's people, in intercessions of this kind. And no doubt, the whole, and every one, is with a view to heighten that lovely feature of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our Advocate and Intercessor: and to endear it to our tenderest affection. What a very lovely and interesting representation of the kind is that of Judah, as recorded in the book of Genesis, standing up to plead before the governor of Egypt, respecting Benjamin, while unconscious who that governor was. (See Gen. xliv. 18, &c.) Perhaps never, in all the annals of history, was there any scene like it, in things relating to this life, than what is there recorded. Let the reader figure to himself, the governor of a kingdom judging a culprit before him, with his companions, under the charge of rob-

bery, and as it appeared to the lookers on, in full detection. Let him behold the parties accused, with all the apprehension of impending judgment and execution. Let him imagine, he beholds Judah stepping forward to plead for mercy, and making an appeal wholly to the clemency of the judge. Such, the instance of Judah, with Joseph; and such of Paul, in the case of Onesimus, with Philemon. But what are all these, and every other, compared with the situation of our utterly lost, ruined, and undone state, when Jesus stood up our Advocate and Intercessor, with our Almighty Governor, for his brethren! It is possible that I may be mistaken; nevertheless, I cannot give up the idea, that God the Holy Ghost, in all these very sweet and interesting records of Scripture, where the earnestness of prevailing intercessions are drawn, meant by such outlines to shadow forth the person and advocacy of our Lord Jesus Christ. When I consider with what a world of apparatus the Old Testament ushered in the New; and that all the several parts of the former, like so many rays of light converging to one centre, pointed to, and met together in, the latter; and all intended for one and the same object; namely, to glorify the person and character of the Lord Jesus Christ; I cannot but conclude that the Holy Ghost was all along preaching Christ, by such ministry, in type and figure; knowing as I do, that the blessed work of God the Holy Ghost, in the covenant of grace, is to glorify Christ, in taking of his and shewing to his people. (John xvi. 14, 15.)

In Paul's pleading for Onesimus, let not the reader overlook with what caution he first mentions the name of the poor fugitive. And let him observe also, how he connects it with the relationship into which he was now brought with Paul; "my son, Onesimus," said the apostle; that is, not his son in

nature, but in grace; not begotten by man; but born of God.

Let us pause a moment. We lose the chief beauty of this Scripture, if in the history of another we overlook ourselves. Every man by nature, both by orignal and by actual transgression, hath run away from God. And, unless met by sovereign grace, as this poor fugitive was when he ran from his master, never should we have returned again to the Lord. The strayed sheep never returns to the fold, unless sought for by the shepherd. The strayed sinner is the same. Until grace enters the heart, the wretched creature would wander for ever.

How many, and how various are the instances of children, apprentices, and servants, who, like the prodigal our Lord represents in the parable, leave their home, and their father's, or master's house, through the uncontrouled lusts of their ungoverned passions. Perhaps at the very moment I am writing, many a tender parent, and kind master, is lamenting in secret, over the wayward perversity of their youthful charge, in this particular; and like Philemon, who, no doubt, sent after Onesimus many a prayer, for the Lord's mercy to be manifested in bringing him back, are imploring similar grace to their unhappy wanderers. If, peradventure, one of those anxious parents or masters should read the lines here before him, I would have him take comfort from this history. Onesimus returned, when least expected; and returned the very reverse of what he went out. Every prayer, awakened by grace, and offered up in faith, must sooner or later be answered in mercy. Let all such remember also, what the Lord saith; "There is a set time to favour Zion." (Psalm ciii. 13.) And as the Lord said by another prophet concerning the Lord's dispensations: "The vision is yet for an appointed time: but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it

tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." (Habak. ii. 3.) One faithful servant of the Lord suceeded, it is said, contrary to all human expectations; "and against hope, believed in hope." (Rom. iv. 18.) And another famous champion in prayer is said, by his strength, "to have had power with God; yea he had power over the angel and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him; he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us." (Hosea xii. 3, 4.) Oh! that all godly parents, and godly masters, may find grace to follow such examples of holy men of old; and plead, wrestle, and strive with God in prayer; and never give over, nor give out, while the salvation of souls, so near and dear to them, are the subjects and objects of their petitions. Perhaps they themselves, for whom you pray, are regardless of all your entreaties for them, and turn a deaf ear to all your remonstrances to them. But you have one resource for them still; and in which they cannot thwart you; namely the mercy seat of God in Christ. Here you may lodge with safety, and with full assurance of faith, all your petitions: and at length, if the Lord please, be sure to be heard; and be made instrumental to save them who are regardless to be saved themselves. And who shall say, when matters are most dark and unpromising, but that the Lord is then coming forth in mercy. The darkest part of night is just before the break of day. Onesimus found grace where least he expected it; and the mercy he ran from at home he found abroad. The Lord give grace to all praying parents and masters, to wait in patience at the throne. Many a prayer lodged there hath at length, and in the Lord's time, had its answer when the petitioner himself hath been long sleeping in his grave.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels;

"Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel:

"But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly.

"For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;

"Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord." (Phil. 12—16.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I CAN easily figure to myself the reception of Onesimus by Philemon; backed with such endearments and persuasiveness of language; and especially, from the predisposing grace the Lord had put in the heart of Philemon, to receive him; the run-away servant was come back, no longer unprofitable and dishonest; but with a new heart and mind, to make amends for all the past, and to repay with affection the kindness which he had before requited with contumely and unpardonable neglect. Philemon knew what it was to refresh the bowels of the saints, from the refreshment of the Lord Jesus, in his own bowels; and it is not straining the subject too far to suppose, that if the heart of Onesimus was bursting with all those finer feelings, such a situation as his, through grace, would occasion; how much more the holy joy of Philemon, in his restoration and recovery! Like the father in the parable, his language no doubt was similar; "for this [my servant] my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost, and is found." (Luke xv. 32.)

The reception of the graceless by godly parents

and masters, when the Lord hath changed their hearts, reminds us of the Lord's overwhelming goodness to his backsliding and wandering children. But how infinitely short do all representations of forgiveness among men appear, to what the Scriptures of God set forth of the Lord's taking back his people. The Holy Ghost, by Jeremiah, hath given a lovely example of the kind, in one of his chapters, in the history of Ephraim. The Lord speaks first; for, in all the return of sinners, grace begins with the Lord. And thus the Lord speaks: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised; as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned I repented; and after that I was instructed I smote upon my thigh. I was ashamed; yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." Here, like another Onesimus, we behold all those meltings of soul which, when grace hath entered the heart, and turned the tide of the affections into another channel, will follow; and blessedly testify the work of divine sovereignty, in regeneration. The convinced sinner bemoans himself. He calls to mind the afflictions the Lord hath sent after him. He hears the rod, and who hath appointed it. And though at the beginning, when under chastisement, he rid stubborn and restive, as a bullock, when brought first into the yoke for drawing burdens, kicks and doth all he can to break his chain; yet, when the Lord adds to the rod the sweet cords of love to turn; and makes himself known to the sinner, as "the Lord his God;" thus being turned, he repents; and thus being instructed to profit, he smites upon his thigh, to testify, (as was the custom of the Eastern manners, when humbled) his submission; and takes

shame and confusion of face, in the recollection of all his former sin and folly.

And what saith the Lord, to all this? "Is Ephraim (saith the Lord) my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." (Jer. xxxi. 18—20.) Can any thing be more beautiful in the illustration of divine grace? Here is Ephraim falling down at the footstool of the mercy seat; and the Lord stooping down to raise him up. I am a worthless sinner, cries Ephraim. Thou art a dear child, saith the Lord. My soul is troubled, saith Ephraim, in looking back to what I have done. My bowels feel for thee, saith the Lord. I will surely have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord! Are there any run-away servants, like Onesimus, that can read this dry-eyed? Doth God indeed lean over the bosom of every returning sinner; and while the sinner is melted in tears, and is blushing with shame at the past, doth God fall upon his neck, melt in mercy and compassion, and say, I have put away thy sins?

It will not be a difficult matter for the reader, (if so be the Lord hath interested his heart to take part in this history) to form, in idea, the reception of Onesimus, on this occasion. Methinks, I see, not only the godly master, but the whole family gathering around the poor wanderer; and all welcoming his return, with features bespeaking the general joy. And if, as we are taught, angels, who can know nothing in a way of fellow feeling to our nature, rejoice over the recovery of one sinner that repenteth; what may be supposed the delight of those of the same nature and family, when at any time the Lord brings back his strayed ones, from sin to salvation?

Say what men will, there is a certain somewhat from our relationship to Christ, which his redeemed ones have with each other by virtue of their union with him, their glorious Head; which forms a cement of the strongest and most interesting nature. I cannot, I confess, define it; yet, though undescribable, it is not the less certain, neither the less delightful. It is that kind of feeling which instinctively draws the heart to take interest in all that concerns them. Grace works in the soul, to induce an harmony of affection; which, like musical instruments strung to the same key, when one is touched, the other vibrates. Hence, in reading the sweet scriptural history of this run-away servant, brought back by sovereign grace to the participation in the privileges of a godly family, which once he despised; we take part in the felicity of the house. And though so many generations have passed away since this event took place, we bring it back to our apprehension, as though the scene was immediately before us, and mingle in the throng, as belonging to the family. And this is what the apostle means, when he saith: "Rejoice with them that do rejoice; and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things; but condescend to them of low estate." (Rom. xii. 15, 16)

We must not overlook, among the other persuasive arguments of the apostle, which he makes use of to induce Philemon to take back again his run-away; that he pleads for his reception in somewhat an higher character than that of a servant. For though still, in fact, a servant; and with cheerfulness he now returned to labour as such, in obedience to all the lawful commands of his master; yet, at the same time, being now brought into a participation, with Philemon, of all the blessings in Christ; he is not simply a servant, and no more, but above a servant—a brother, beloved.

There is somewhat truly interesting in this statement. And the more so, if we consider the condition of servitude in those dark ages of the world. For the greater part were simply not servants, by voluntary offer of themselves, but slaves, by purchase. And yet to such, when grace had brought them into a nearer and tenderer tie, the apostle urged the love of a brother. Hence we find these important precepts blended: "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men. Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ." In like manner masters are commanded on their part: "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven." And in both cases, the obligation will be more or less felt and acknowledged, as a sense of divine favour is more or less known and enjoyed.

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## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.

"If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account.

"I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it; albeit I do not say to thee, how thou owest unto me even thine ownself besides.

"Yea brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.

"Having confidence in thy obedience, I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say."

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It is somewhat singular, to hear the apostle, whose constant poverty was almost proverbial, undertaking the payment of Onesimus's debts, if he owed his master any thing. But in what he adds of Philemon's owing even himself, to Paul, as having been instrumental in the Lord's hand, for his conversion; we enter upon the apostle's meaning. Dropping therefore, for a moment all the several parties in this transaction; the master, the servant, and the apostle; if we look at the Lord Jesus Christ, in that gracious act of his, as our Surety and Sponsor; we behold Paul as well as Philemon, and his servant, all alike interested in this one great redemption. Yea, both the writer, and the reader, of these lines, without a personal interest in the Suretyship of Christ, were equally insolvent. For we have all erred and strayed from the Lord; and by nature and by practice run away from his service. And who is there in the consciousness of such things, and having been forgiven our ten thousand talents, can go forth, and take a fellow servant by the throat, for the payment of an hundred pence? Oh! for grace, as the followers of the Lord, "to put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." (Col. iii. 12, 13.)

And now in summing up the whole of this runaway's history, brought back as he was by means so extraordinary; will not every one that reads it be constrained to say: "What hath God wrought!" And wherefore hath the Holy Ghost preserved the record of it, with so much care, amidst the inspired

writings of his sacred word to the present hour, but to shew what a marvellous work is the work of grace, in every instance of a sinner's recovery? It was not all the tenderness of the kindest master; no nor all the theatenings of God's law, could work a change upon the mind of Onesimus; (and such is the state of all men by nature,) until the Lord took up the cause, and changed "the heart of stone, into an heart of flesh." (Ezek. xxxvi. 26.)

From hence, we ascend to another most important observation, namely, what a wonder-working God is our God, who hath "all hearts at his disposal: and like rivers of waters turneth them whithersoever he pleaseth." (Prov. xxi. 1.) He, and He alone, who could and did say to the boisterous waves, *Be still!* and instantly there was a calm; can in a moment, turn the sinner "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan, to the living God." And what encouragement is here to godly parents and masters; and indeed, all that are interested in the temporal and spiritual welfare of the rising generation, to seek grace for them from the Lord, "who blesseth the habitation of the just!" (Proverbs iii. 13.) Prayerless families, who rise up and lie down, as herds of the stall, with unbended knees to the Lord, are unconscious of the blessedness of such employments. But what may not be expected; yea what was not actually found, "after many days, as bread cast upon the waters," from this praying family of Philemon, in the instance of Onesimus! And indeed what may not be everlastingly looked for, to follow the unceasing supplications of the faithful, when the heads of houses enter not on the business of the day, or close in the employment of the night, but in presenting themselves, and their whole family, with themselves, at the throne of grace. It was this very feature of character, which the Lord marked in Abraham, when

the Lord said; "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? For I know him that he will command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment: that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." (Gen. xviii. 17—19.) So lovely, and so prevailing in the sight of the Lord, is such a circle, on their knees before him, that the Lord will not have one if possible, to be absent. "Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children;" yea, as if the very presence of babes, in their unconscious state, still pleaded before him, the Lord adds: "and those that suck the breasts." (Joel ii. 16.)

To add no more. Should this history come under the eye of any recovered by grace, and who is returned by the Lord, from sin to salvation; let him take with him the very blessed words of the Lord, by the apostle: "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." (Philip. iv. 8, 9.)

fulfil his last and parting words, which he had said to them when all together, and in the moment of his ascension: "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.)

And in confirmation of this, it is highly worthy of remark, that in our Lord's farewell discourse with his disciples; when at the institution of that sweet and costly supper, which he appointed as a standing memorial of his death, until his final coming; among other most blessed assurances of his unceasing regard for his church and people, he made this express promise: "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you;" intimating thereby, a plain and positive assurance, that he would make such special and personal discoveries of himself, as they should know him by, and which should give them comfort. And in a yet more endearing manner, if it were possible, the Lord added, that those discoveries which he would make of himself, should be so totally different from all the former and outward revelations which had before been made to them, in common with the nation of the Jews, among whom he had exercised his divine ministry; that their knowledge of him should be exclusive; and to themselves only, and not to others. "Yet a little while (said Jesus,) and the world seeth me no more." (John xiv. 19.) And it is a fact, which if the reader knoweth not he will do well to know, and as duly to consider; namely, that as the Lord Jesus said, so it hath proved; never did Christ appear to a single person, after his ascension, among the carnal; but to such only, as were, and are, his own people. And this, as it is a most important point to know, so is it as blessedly assured to all his redeemed ones, by the Lord himself. For while Jesus said, "A little while, and the world seeth me no more;" he immediately added to them:

"but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.)

As I venture to believe the Lord's personal visit to John, at Patmos, was expressly made with this design; that by so palpable an evidence, he might teach his church, to the very end of time, he was, and would be, personally present with them; and that this open display of his love should be considered and received by them, as a token how he would privately, in after ages, make discovery of himself to them, "otherwise than he doeth to the world;" I would beg to introduce the observations on this most glorious manifestation of Christ, to John, with a remark or two more; which, under divine teaching, may serve to illustrate the subject yet plainer, and confirm the statement on this ground which I have already given, according to my apprehensions of it.

And here, not to make too large a circuit of holy Scripture, by way of explanation of this most interesting record in relation to John; I would call the reader's attention no farther back, in addition to what hath been already said, than merely to remind him, that shortly after Christ's return to glory, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost, the Lord Jesus gave early notice of this his most gracious intention, in making visits to his people; and in the instance at the death of Stephen; by the blessed and glorious revelation he then made of himself, to his first martyr; shewed, by that open display, what his private manifestations would be, more or less, upon other occasions. "Stephen, (it is said) being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God; and Jesus, standing on the right hand of God; and said, Behold! I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts vii. 55, 56.)

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE

# *LORD JESUS CHRIST TO JOHN,*

## IN THE ISLE OF PATMOS.

### HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

"I was in the Spirit, on the Lord's day, and heard behind me, a great voice, as of a trumpet,

"Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; and what thou seest write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea." (Rev. i. 9—11.)

### NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I DO not know whether the reader is spiritually taught of God; but if he be, I venture to say, that he will find great sweetness in this Scripture account of our adorable Lord's manifestation of himself to his beloved apostle John, in the desolate isle of Patmos; where he was banished, "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Numberless are the very blessed things which are contained in it; and numberless are the instructions and consolations which arise out of it to the church of our most glorious

Christ, when a savour from the Lord accompanieth the reading, or the hearing of it. For here, as much as any where, may it be said; that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.)

That this most gracious manifestation of our most glorious Christ, to his servant John, and at the close of Scripture, was not meant for the personal comfort of the beloved apostle only; but for the everlasting comfort of the Lord's people, in all ages of the church, is evident, from many considerations; what the Holy Ghost taught the Lord's people upon another occasion may be safely applied here; namely, that "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." (2 Pet. i. 20.) For, not to enumerate the many manifestations the Lord was pleased to make of himself to his people, after he arose from the dead; the sweet and gracious promises of our most glorious Christ, on this subject, plainly testify, that his intention was to make frequent, yea, a constant communication of himself to them, by such spiritual marks as should carry with them decided testimonies of his presence. And the open displays of himself, which he made *then*, were designed as pledges of what he would do *afterwards;* and also to the very end of time, spiritually; when those open displays would not so suitably correspond to his purposes, neither to his people's advantage. And this very blessed and striking appearance of the Lord, to old John, when all the other apostles were dead, and as the last written word of holy Scripture was closing, was meant to shew, that Jesus was, and is, and everlastingly will be, the same all-loving and all-lovely Saviour, as he had been from the beginning; and that he would

and GODHEAD, of our Lord Jesus Christ. But as some of the distinguishing perfections which constitute Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, will occasionally meet us as we pass on; and glorious views of the person of Christ; I proceed at once to that part of John's history, now before us, looking to the Lord, for an unction and savour, from his divine teaching, to render our attention to it profitable.

John begins with pointing out his relationship to the church in Christ; and calls himself, "a brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." I pause at the very threshold, to observe with what humbleness John speaks of himself. He passeth by all notice of his apostleship, and placeth himself upon a level with all the Lord's family in the tribulated path of the present wilderness state. And this, though I lay no stress upon it, in the great subject I am upon; yet, I cannot but think, was evidently designed, with an eye to the conveying to the church, the fellow-interest the whole family of our most glorious Christ in all ages had, and hath, with John, in his vision. "A brother and companion in tribulation, for God's word, and the testimony of Jesus Christ," seemed to intimate, as though John thought, that this glorious manifestation of his Lord and Master, which was made to him, and which he was about to relate, had equal respect, and was equally designed by the Lord, for the comfort of all the Lord's family. He adds that he was in the isle that is called Patmos; a desolate spot in the Archipelago, where he was banished by the Emperor of Rome, "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." And here, when out of humanity's reach, and no society with men; John found the most blessed manifestations from God. So it hath been in all ages: so it now is, and while the world lasts, so will it always be; when creature re-

sources fail, the Lord's people find a greater fulness and sweetness in Creator supplies. And when our cisterns are all broken, or dried up, then is known and enjoyed more blessedly, "the streams of that river which maketh glad the city of God."

John tells us, that he was in this place; and it was on the Lord's-day, when he was favoured with this glorious vision of our most glorious Christ. I cannot pass away from this memorandum of the apostle, as to the time of John's mercy herein, without first observing, that as John was by birth a Jew, the original sabbath had been with him, before his call to the Lord by grace, on the seventh day. But, as after the resurrection, the church of Christ observed the first day of the week, in honour of our Lord's triumph over the grave, instead of the seventh; and hence called this the sabbath and the Lord's day; it is plain that the apostle, even in Patmos, so regarded it. And this by the way, is a farther confirmation (if it were necessary) that the Lord himself approved the change. I admire the expression the apostle useth when he saith: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." I pray the reader to pause and admire it also. The Lord's day, without the Lord's Spirit with his people, makes no preparation in the heart for the enjoyment of the Lord, in his ordinances. John being in the Spirit, though in this uninhabited spot, and where there were no ordinances, enjoyed more of Christ, than thousands do, in the peopled city, amidst all ordinances. The church of Christ is a spiritual church. And the worship of Christ must be spiritual. (John iv. 24.—Philip. iii. 3.) But what an encouragement doth this situation of the apostle afford to comfort the Lord's chosen ones, amidst barren places, barren frames, and when barren of ordinances! The Lord, that was coming to his servant to manifest himself "otherwise than he doeth to the

I cannot but consider this as a most blessed and unanswerable testimony in point. And though I do not mean to say, that the instance of Stephen is to be brought into all the circumstances of common life, as an example for similar manifestations to be expected by all that die in the Lord, yet I conceive it may well be supposed as affording the highest encouragement to the faithful, in all ages, for expecting some very blessed support from the Lord, in the dying hours of the Lord's people. As Jesus then was seen by his dying martyr, standing to receive him; so may he now be beheld by faith, graciously waiting to receive all his redeemed ones in their departure to himself, "that where he is, there they shall be also." And who, indeed, shall say, or even conceive, what takes place between the Lord and his faithful followers, of grace and support, in their dying moments; of which no looker-on is conscious!

And no less, the special revelation the Lord Jesus made of himself, after this, to Paul, when he called to him from heaven, on his way to Damascus; is a confirmation of the same. For, not only did the Lord Jesus, as in the case of his manifestation to Stephen, appear to him in a glory "above the brightness of the sun;" but also conversed with Paul, and allowed Paul to converse with him. Yea, the Holy Ghost hath recorded the very words which the Son of God spake to him from heaven, when the Lord, called him to the knowledge of himself by sovereign grace: "I have appeared unto thee, (said the Lord) for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in which I will appear unto thee." (Acts xxii. 16.) Here, as in the former case of the Lord's appearing to Stephen, it is not to be supposed, neither do I refer to it as if I would imply, that in all the examples of conversion, such displays of the Lord

are made. On the contrary, the gracious work is, for the most part, carried on secretly and privately, so that the stander by is not conscious what is doing. But both these illustrious manifestations of the Lord Jesus Christ were intended to make known to the church, in all ages, that the Lord, now in heaven, is as attentive to his people, and as near to their persons to bless them, as when he was upon earth. The private spiritual revelations of his grace; and the open bodily manifestations of his favour, are to one and the same end. Doth any one, from those different scriptural representations of the Lord's appearing to his people, ask the question, when is a man to know the day of his saving conversion? Paul, hath already answered it, in the instance of himself: "When it pleased God (saith Paul) who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his son in me." (Gal. i. 16.) The revelation of Christ, as Christ, to the soul, in the glories of his person, and in the fulness, and suitableness, and all-sufficiency of his finished salvation; this is the day, that ever-blessed day, of the true conversion of every soul to God.

An interval took place, of somewhat more than *three-score years,* from the time of the Lord's calling to Paul, from heaven, and his appearing to John, in the manner here described, in this Scripture of the Book of the Revelation. I must not allow myself to dwell upon the preceding part of the chapter to the portion with which the beloved apostle gives this relation of himself, and where he was, and how engaged, when favoured with this glorious vision and revelation of our most glorious Christ; otherwise, I might shew what a blessed account this divine book of God commenceth with, in confirmation of the glorious doctrine of the Holy Three in One, which bear record in heaven; and more particularly of the person

world," prepared his spirit for the spiritual apprehension of himself, at his coming. And John, who honoured the Lord's day, with setting it apart for the Lord's honour, found even in Patmos such a manifestation from the Lord, as all temples made with hands cannot give. Oh! what unanswerable arguments do such views afford, of honouring the Lord; day, in waiting for the Lord's presence! Surely, every redeemed and regenerated child of God may expect blessed and gracious visits from the Lord's; especially when it be considered, (as hath been before observed) that this very manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ to John, was not intended for the personal comfort only of the apostle, but by such an open display to him of the Lord's love, to carry with it to the latest ages of the church upon earth, a full demonstration that his private visits should be as truly their's, as this public one had been to John.

John proceeds to shew that being thus under spiritual impressions, and without the medium of ordinances, "he heard behind him a great voice, as of a trumpet." Here seems to have been a very blessed confirmation of that sweet promise of the Lord, by the prophet: "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." (Isa. xxx. 21.) And when the voice behind, and the sovereign power of the Spirit within, is felt in the heart, the soul of every redeemed and regenerated child of God is prepared, like the apostle, to hear what the Lord God will speak, concerning his people.

It was a very gracious act of our most glorious Lord, to his servant, to speak from behind to the apostle; and to proclaim his adorable name; and the Almighty perfections of his nature and essence, be-

fore that he manifested himself to the apostle before him in person. The voice, though great, like a trumpet, yet sweetly sounded also, when He said who He was, and declared himself the "Alpha and Omega; the first and the last." For such being the well known charchters distinguishing Jehovah from all his creatures; the apostle, as the prophets before had been blessed with revelations from the Lord, became the better prepared to receive the message which followed. We find a similarity of expression used by Jehovah, to the prophet Isaiah: "Who hath wrought and done it; calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord; the first and with the last; I am he!" (Isa. xli. 4.) So again, (Isa. xliv. 6.) "Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of Hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me, there is no God." And if those Scriptures be read with an eye to what the same beloved apostle John saith; (1 John v. 20.) what a beautiful light is thrown thereby on each other! Surely such characters of GODHEAD need no comment. They carry with them the fullest confirmation to the eternity and unchangeableness of him, who includes in himself both first and last, without beginning and without end; "upholding (as it is elsewhere said) all things; and by whom all things consist." (Col. i. 17.)

I detain the reader to remark yet farther, the infinite grace of our most glorious Christ, in that, before he inclined his servant John to turn to see who it was that was thus speaking to him, the Lord delivered also the message with which he was going to employ him: "What thou seest, (said the Lord) write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia, unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia and unto Laodicea." Thus softening the

mind of the apostle, in so condescending a method of assuring him of his love, before that he turned to behold the glory of Christ's person, which of itself, would overwhelm him, so as to cast him to the earth. I pray the reader, to keep this in view. So doth the Lord by all his redeemed ones. Though not like Paul or John, such overwhelming revelations are not now made, because they are no longer necessary; yet all the manifestations of the Lord Jesus to his people are to same effect. The Lord first prepares the mind for what he is about to do for them; and then most graciously reveals himself in the several love-tokens of his favour.

The reader will observe, that I have not noticed the names of the seven churches, for I shall not be able to find space within the necessary limits of this little work to dwell upon their history. Not, for that it would not be profitable so to do, for it would be highly profitable and instructive. But because I have more to call the reader's attention to, in relation to our glorious Lord's manifestation to John, than I shall be able to fill in within those pages. I would therefore only offer one remark respecting those churches, and the Lord's message to them; namely, that what the Lord sent to them was not of a private nature; but had respect to the church of Christ, in all the succeeding ages, from John's time to the present hour; and to our nation, as a professing nation, in this awful day; and ought to be regarded with trembling apprehension. Those churches are no more. The places where they stood are occupied by professed infidels. The Lord's sentence upon them hath been long since executed. And it will be our wisdom to keep in remembrance the Lord's words: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast

received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." (Rev. iii. 2, 3.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And I turned to see the voice that spake with me; and being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

"And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

"His head and his hairs were like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire.

"And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

"And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." (Rev. i. 12—16.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

We here enter upon that most sublime subject, of the Lord Jesus manifesting himself to his beloved disciple John; and which interests the church in the fullest sense of interest: because though vouchsafed to John, it evidently carries with it the most perfect assurance, that every redeemed and regenerated child of God is as much included in this gracious act of mercy.

It was very blessed that John's attention should first be attracted to the contemplation of the *candlesticks*, in order to prepare the apostle's mind, by a gradual discovery; first of the church of our most glorious Christ; and then of Christ himself. And as at the close of this interview, the Lord explained to John what he saw, in declaring that the candlesticks were

emblems of the church; so the representation which the Lord made was the most descriptive, concerning his church, which could be. For what more suited to denote the love of Christ to his church, than his being in the midst? And what more humble to point out the littleness, and nothingness of his church, when considered without an eye to him, than a candlestick? For what is a candlestick, but merely a receiver; empty, and in itself, nothing? A thousand candlesticks, without a candle, can afford no light. And ten thousand of the Lord's people, without the Lord, are but as cyphers. That Almighty One must be placed at the head of them, to give them both being and value. The Lord Jesus, in the midst of his church, is the sole glory of his church. And so the Lord himself speaks: "For I, (saith the Lord) will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." (Zech. ii. 5.) We must not overlook the epithet given by the Lord to his church, in that the Lord speaks of his candlesticks, as *golden*. Yes! golden they are, and precious; infinitely "more precious than gold that perisheth with using;" because the Lord hath made them so, "from the comeliness that he hath put upon them." And when from the rubbish of nature, into which they were fallen by the Adam-fall transgression, the Lord hath formed them for himself; then in the blessed process of grace, the Lord accomplisheth his purposes concerning them; and they are golden indeed. The Lord saith himself: "And I will refine them as silver is refined; and will try them as gold is tried, They shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." (Zech. xiii. 9.)

The relation proceeds. "In the midst of the candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man;" namely, Christ himself, for in the close of this vision, the Lord

so desribes himself. But first, John gives a description of his appearance, and his apparel. "He was clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." Probably to denote the sweet and blessed character of our Intercessor; which, until all the purposes of his redemption are completed, he still carries on at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Hence, the Holy Ghost so comforts the church by Paul. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 14—16.) And what could more affectionately endear Christ, than this manifesting himself under this form; as his servant the high priest, who typified him of old; (Exod. xxviii. 2, &c.) as if to say: "Behold, I wear these vestments still: to intimate the perpetual efficacy of my blood-shedding and righteousness, for the justification and acceptance of all my people."

Next follows, in order, the relation given of his person. "His head and his hairs white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes as a flame of fire. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters." Without entering into a particular examination of the several features here given, I would rather accept the whole, as designed to describe the Almighty, divine, and glorious person, manifested in his double nature, as God, and man, in One; according to the account the Holy Ghost, by the apostle Paul, gave of him, when he said: "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Col. ii. 9.) Such a

view seems to have been very particularly intended at the close of Scripture, by way of leaving a long and firm impression on the church. For I beg it may be remembered what was said before, and which indeed, can never be too often repeated, nor too strongly remembered; that the manifestation of this double nature, of God and man, in One person; and that person, our most glorious Christ, was most plainly designed to set forth the relationship he still holds, and will to all eternity hold, to his church and people. So that here is discovered, (and it is the greatest mercy that can be discovered, in the present life of faith,) how unceasing and for ever, the security of the church is, from being united to, and depending upon, her most glorious head and husband. And from his being both God and man in One; we have the fullest assurance of his everlasting, and unalterable love to his people. Neither is this all. For, as the Lord hath our nature united to the divine, and that for everlasting; his love and kindness to his people is, and must be, everlasting also. And until Christ, ceaseth to be man, and ceaseth to be God, never can his love, or his affection to his body the church, which is his own, cease. So that as *man,* all our blessings of holiness, happiness, and safety are in him, and flow to us from a nature like our own; and as *God,* thus gives a fulness for supply, and an eternity to supply in, which can never be interrupted or exhausted, world without end. And in *both,* the Lord comes home endeared to our warmest affection, as the glorious "Head of his body the church, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. i. 23.)

One observation more meets us in this sublime description of our most glorious Christ; for it is said, that "he had in his right hand seven stars;" intimating, as the following account gives, that "the seven stars were the angels of the seven churches;" and as such

the Lord Jesus Christ held them by his sovereign power; that they are under his government; and their light and life, and usefulness, are all derived from him. And not only so, but that they are dear to him, for he "holds them in his right hand." He is also represented, as having a "two-edged sword, which went forth from his mouth;" being emblematical that all divine revelation proceeds wholly from him. Moreover the word of God, both under the Old Testament, and the New, is said to be "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." (Heb. iv. 12.) And it is to the Lord, which "convinceth of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." (John xvi. 6.) And the relation of Christ's person is closed up in the short, but striking representation—"his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." In the account of Christ's transfiguration, in the mount, when this same John, with Peter, and James were favoured with that glorious vision, somewhat similar is said: that "his face did shine as the sun." (Matt. xvii. 2.) Both were intended to give a glimpse, and but a glimpse, of the glory of Christ, and in such as the Lord Jesus Christ would manifest himself to, his people, in the world to come. But neither were the apostles *then*, neither was John *now*, able to bear the effulgence of that glory, which is Christ's: and in which he will at the last day appear. Both was designed to set forth his glory. But these were all transient and momentary. The manifestation of the Son of God, at the last day, will be more abundantly glorious. We shall then be qualified and prepared for the enjoyment of it; and as the Holy Ghost speaks by the apostle; "when Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." (Col. iii. 4.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Rev. i. 17, 18.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I CANNOT propose to enter into the whole particulars of this sublime passage. It can be the outlines only, and those in a transient way, which I can merely glance at. And I begin with what is said of the effect wrought upon the mind of John, at the view of Christ. He tells us, "that he fell at his feet as dead." Holy men of old all along conceived that the sight of the Lord must produce death. So that Jacob marvelled at the vision granted him at Peniel, when he said: "I have seen God, face to face, and my life is preserved." (Gen. xxxii. 30.) And before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he openly tabernacled in our flesh, there was always an apprehension on the mind, relative to the sight of God. But I pray the reader to connect with this renewed manifestation the Lord Jesus Christ made to John, at Patmos, the former manifestation which the Lord had made of himself, in the mount of transfiguration. *Here* John fell at his feet as dead. But *there* though John, and those that were with him, it is said, were afraid, yet it is evident they were more pleased than alarmed; for they said, "It is good for us to be here." (Matt. xvii. 4.) Now hence, I venture to make this conclusion; that there was a difference between Christ's transfiguration while upon earth, and Christ's revelation of himself,

to John, after he had returned to glory. And I also venture to make another conclusion; namely, that this revelation of the Lord Jesus, to John, and which induced this instant effect of falling before Christ, as dead, was meant to shew, that with all the love Christ hath to his people, these bodies of ours, which are the objects and subjects of sin, cannot behold Christ, but with apprehensions of death. This John was the same John who had lain in Christ's bosom, when upon earth. He therefore is singled out to shew the total impossibility of beholding, in open vision, *One* whom we all so dearly love, unappalled, and without terror, while we are in a body of sin and death. And I would ask, from hence, what can more strikingly preach the necessity of going down to the grave, in order to see the face of Christ, in glory? When he shall have changed our vile bodies, and made them like unto his own glorious body, then may we behold him face to face, and "know even as we are known." There is not, in my view, a better, nor a more satisfying argument, to reconcile true believers in Christ to the humiliation of the grave; yea, and more than reconcile them to it; even to a longing for it; since an event so truly blissful ariseth out of it. Who that considered this sin and corruption of ours, in our mortal flesh, as the sole cause of being overwhelmed at the sight of Christ, who is, and must be, the one glorious object of all our desire; but must rejoice at the prospect of dropping this tabernacle, when the Lord shall appoint, that when "Jesus shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

But we must not stop here. When John fell at the feet of Christ as dead, he saith: "And he laid his hand upon me, saying, Fear not." Observe, the same Almighty hand, in which he held the seven stars.

And as if to convince the apostle, and not him only, but the whole church with him, and by such a palpable demonstration, that though his state was changed by death, yet, his nature was unaltered; "Having loved his own which are in the world, he loveth them to the end." Methinks, I could dwell for ever on this view of our most glorious Christ. And methinks, I would have every redeemed and regenerated child of God to do the same, and never lose sight of it. Here, in the very close of Scripture, he comes once more, finally and fully, to make a revelation of himself; and to shew, that death hath made no alteration in him, in his affection to his people. He was the same Lord Jesus he had always been. And by making choice of John, of all others, who had been admitted into so sweet a familiarity with him while on earth, and now returned to heaven; he had come purposely, in the instance of this man, to shew, that however strong the effect momentarily wrought by his presence, the interview should always be blessed, and fear should be changed into joy.

I detain the reader, to admire the blessedness of the Lord's expression; *Fear not.* As if to bring particularly to John's recollection what the Lord had said in his last parting discourse with them at the holy supper; and which John himself had, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, but just before written, in what is called, The gospel according to John, to the church, (supposed to have been written, Anno, 60.) "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." &c. (John xiv. 1.) And the Lord again repeated it: verse 27. Precious Lord! what attention to thy church and people!

But the Lord proceeded: "I am the first and the last." Observe here, the certain and unequivocal characters of GODHEAD. The Almighty Speaker, who distinguisheth himself by those well known

names, and which he had twice before in this chapter, (8th and 11th verses) hereby assumes to himself all the underived excellency and dignity which he possesseth, in common with the Father, and the Holy Ghost. And I beg the reader the more particularly to notice our most glorious Christ thus speaking to his servant John; and at the close of Scripture, when he would appear no more, until he comes finally to judge the world; because the proper apprehension of his person can be the only true foundation for a proper apprehension of the infinite worth and efficacy of his finished salvation. And while I make this request to the reader, to be particularly attentive to this leading doctrine of our most holy faith; I no less desire it may be understood, that it is impossible, in the very nature of things, to see the suitableness of Christ, as a Saviour, unless he knows who Christ is; and from thence, to trust in the all-sufficiency of his merits.

Hence, the Scriptures are in no point more express, than to bring the church intimately acquainted with her God and Saviour, in shewing his oneness with the Father and the Holy Ghost, in all the underived essence and nature of the GODHEAD. Hence, Paul was inspired to speak of him, as "one in the form of God, and with whom, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God." (Philip. ii. 5, 6.) Hence John was taught the same; namely, that "That which was from the beginning, which they had heard, which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon, and their hands had handled of the word of life, was that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto them." (1 John i. 2.) Observe the expression, *which was with* the Father. Not *from* the Father, as if derived; but *with* the Father; as being one in essence, and in all the attributes of GODHEAD equal. And the Lord Jesus Christ himself declared, "that he had

glory with the Father, before the world was." (John xvii. 5.) "I (said Christ) and my Father are one." (John x. 39.) These are most decisive and unanswerable testimonies, in confirmation of what our Lord here again in substance declared to John, in the last open manifestation he would make of himself, until the day of judgment. And let the reader not fail to connect with it, that the revelation here made was not solely for the comfort of John, but the church in all ages; as is fully proved by the Son of God commanding him, "to write the things which he had seen, and send to the churches." (Rev. i. 19. and Rev. ii. 1. &c.)

But we must not stop here. The Son of God, when he had thus proclaimed his eternal nature and GODHEAD, as the first and the last, added, "I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore. Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." To each of these sublime truths it will be our mercy if the Lord, the Spirit, gives grace both to him that writes, and to him that reads, to have a true spiritual and scriptural apprehension. When the Son of God assumes to himself those blessed distinctions, "I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore;" he ascribes to himself what belongs personally and only to him; I mean that he is the sole author and finisher of salvation. By the assumption of our nature into union with his GODHEAD, he and he alone became competent to "raise up the tabernacles of David, which had fallen down, and close up the breaches thereof." (Amos ix. 11.) Hence it is said: "His own arm brought salvation; and by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Isa. lxiii. Heb. ix. 12.) There are very many, and very blessed things, accomplished in the great work of salvation; but all and every one were

wholly accomplished by the person of our most glorious Christ. This is the first and principal feature in the recovery of the church from the ruins of the fall; and which, above every other consideration, needs to be continually inculcated and kept in mind by the church. We are so apt to be looking more to *effects* than to the *cause;* and forming our views of salvation more by a supposed work wrought *in* us, than by the complete work the Son of God hath wrought out *for* us. Whereas, salvation, from beginning to end, is the sole agency of Christ. It was, and is, his incommunicable work. It was, and is, alone in him; and can be in no other. And when the Lord, the Spirit, by regeneration, hath quickened you, or me, who by nature, both in original and in actual trangressions, "were dead in trespasses and sins," to a new and spiritual life, we are then brought into a spiritual apprehension of those Almighty acts, of our Almighty Christ; and disposed to receive on our bended knees, in transports of rejoicing salvation, as the sole gift of God. Those sovereign words of Christ, when spiritually understood, and spiritually received into the soul, bring with them spiritual apprehensions of their very great blessedness. When Jesus saith, "I am he that liveth and was dead," we learn that by his death, he hath overcome death; he hath sustained in his holy nature the death due to sin; he hath conquered sin, death, hell, and the grave; for in his own sacred person, as our Surety, he hath borne our sins "in his own body on the tree, when he died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." And when the Lord adds, "and behold I am alive for evermore;" nothing can more decidedly shew the completeness of his great salvation; for hereby "he was declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. i. 4.) As the grave could not detain him; so neither

can it detain his people. He saith himself, "I am the resurrection and the life; He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die." (John xi. 25.) Hence, what light and blessedness pours in upon the dark state of fallen nature, when in the contemplation of Christ's death we behold death destroyed; and in Christ's resurrection we discover the resurrection of his people secured. Surely, from the cross and the tomb of the Lord Jesus first arose the clear prospect of life and immortality brought to light by his gospel. And in his resurrection and ascension, the faithful can and do look beyond and over all the dying circumstances of the dying world around; and in him, and his finished salvation, exult, in the language of the apostle: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. xv. 55—57.)

We must not overlook that short, but precious, word—Amen. The Lord himself here used it; and well then may we. And it is most blessed; not only by way of confirmation of the divine truths which the Lord had just before expressed; but of all the divine truths contained in his gospel. The word is put at the close of each of the inspired writings of the Evangelists. And in its original sense and meaning, signifies, "verily, certain, sure, true, faithful." Neither is this all. For it is in this *Amen* the people of God are commanded to bless themselves. "That he who blesseth himself in the earth, (saith the Lord, by the prophet) shall bless himself in the God of truth;" that is the *Amen*. (Isa. lxv. 16.) For certain it is, when at any time the Lord's people say Amen, to the Lord's blessings, or his promises, they do, to all intents and purposes, speak in the name of Christ. For he is the blessing of blessings. And He is the first

and great promise in the Bible. And "all the promises in Him, are Yea and Amen." (2 Cor. i. 20.) Moreover, Christ himself so useth it, and repeatedly in his blessed gospel. For the word which we have translated *verily* is in the original *Amen.* And very often; and especially, in his heavenly discourses, as recorded by John; we find our dear Lord beginning them with Amen, Amen; *verily, verily.* And in his Epistle to the church of Laodicea, the Lord Jesus calls himself by this very name: "These things saith the Amen." (Rev. iii. 16.) And I do not know what views the reader hath of these things; but this I know, that when to this great Amen, this faithful Witness of all blessings, and who is himself, the sum and substance of all blessings, in time, and to all eternity, we can, and do, put our hearty Amen; so be it; we do all that is left us to do, in relation to the divine glory. So John did, when ascribing glory to God for ever and ever. (Rev. i. 6.) And so the church. (Rev. v. 14.) And so would I. Amen to God's glory, for what he is in himself, independent of what he hath done for his creatures. He is in himself alone in his Trinity of persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, "over all, God blessed for ever, Amen." (Rom. ix. 15.)

But the words of our most glorious Christ, in this his manifestation to John, add also, that he hath "the keys of hell and of death." And this is a very blessed close to what went before. For what can comfort the spiritual church of Christ, equal to this assurance? Surely, every regenerated child of God may now confidently say: If my God and Saviour hath the keys of hell, how can I ever be sent there? And if the keys of death are also in his Almighty hand, who, or what shall make a grave for me, without his knowledge and appointment? This, our glorious Christ, is the true Eliakim, spoken of by the prophet;

and confirmed by the Lord himself; "He openeth, and none shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." (See Isa. xxii. 20—24. compared with Rev. iii. 7.) Oh! what a ravishing view to the souls of his people! He hath the key of heaven; and the key of his word: and the key of every heart of his people. Methinks, I hear him say, as to John, *Fear not!* Oh! for grace to hear as the prophet did, when the Lord spake unto him with a strong hand: and made with it a strong impression of his word on the heart: and then to do, as he was commanded, "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself: and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread, and he shall be a sanctuary." (Isa. viii. 11—14.)

I must not enlarge; and therefore shall only detain the reader to observe, with what a world of tenderness, the Lord Jesus, looking to the generations of his church which were to follow, commanded John to commit to writing this gracious manifestation of himself, which he had made to him: "Write the things, (said Christ) which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." It is by means of this unparalleled condescension in our God that the spiritual church of Christ, in all ages, from the days of John to the present hour, hath been blessed with renewed and renewing enjoyments of this last open manifestation of the Lord, in the private discoveries of the same, through the blessed teachings of the Holy Ghost. And I take occasion herefrom to observe, what was slightly noticed before, that the gracious act of the Lord Jesus, not only in this final appearing to the apostle, before the close of Scripture, but all the discoveries that he made of himself, after he arose from the dead, were all directed with one and the same tendency; namely, to shew how his people might take warrant therefrom, to assure themselves that his *spiritual* visits, and the discoveries which, to the very end of

time, he would make to his people of himself should be in perfect correspondence, in point of affection, with the several *personal* appearances he made after his resurrection and ascension. And, if this were not the case, the Lord's people, now, might be tempted to suppose their privileges are not so great, as those who lived in the days of the apostles. Therefore, by so plain and decided a testimony, the Lord evidently meant to comfort his redeemed ones with the assurance, that to the very end of time his love, as his person, is always the same to his people. The redeemed and regenerated child of God hath full authority from hence to conclude, he is always near them; and infinitely more disposed to manifest himself to them, than they are to seek him. Love and desire begins on his part; "I am (saith the church) my Beloved's, and his desire is towards me." (Song vii. 10.) And when that desire of Christ awakens in his chosen a desire after him, the Lord fulfils his gracious promise, in "manifesting himself to them otherwise than he doeth to the world."

I beg the reader to take with him another observation, which ariseth out of this manifestation of the Lord, to John; namely, he was alone. The Lord hath been known to single out seasons of his people's retirement, for purposes of this nature. The Lord, indeed, "blesseth the assembly of his saints; and is known in the congregation of his people." But Jesus, not unfrequently, makes his love visits when his people are without the means and ordinances of worship. The two disciples, on the morning of Christ's resurrection, had a special manifestation from the Lord, in their way to Emmaus. (Luke xxiv. 30—32.) And Mary Magdalene, while at the sepulchre, with the other women and the disciples, saw not the Lord Jesus, until she was left alone, and they had returned home. (John xx. 10, &c.)

And I pray the reader not to forget, but remark again and again, with pecular emphasis; that it was

the Lord's day, when the Lord thus manifested himself to John. There is a peculiar blessedness in the Lord's day: and from this instance of John, the Lord's people are encouraged to hope special tokens of a spiritual nature from the Lord on his own day. It was the day honoured of the Lord, at creation. It was the honoured day of the Lord, in his resurrection. And sure I am, it is the honoured day of the Lord, whensoever, on that day, the Lord grants a spiritual resurrection to any of his redeemed ones, who are then quickened by sovereign grace, and were before "dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. ii. 1.)

One word more. Let the humble followers of the Lord learn to prize those spiritual visits of the Lord, as very precious evidences of the Lord's love. It is not the privilege of all the family to be equally instructed in divine things. Some higher, some less in attainments. But it is a rich equivalent to the humble and lowly of his people, when the Lord makes frequent manifestations of himself to them. One visit from Jesus is more valuable than much knowledge without. And there are many of God's little ones, who can but poorly reason on divine things, who yet enjoy very blessed communion with the Lord. And surely the highest and truest testimony of the renewed life, is not in *talking* about God, as much as *walking* wilk God. Personal knowledge of, and personal communion with, and personal manifestation from, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the person of Jesus Christ, is ever to be considered as the best testimony of the life of God in the soul. I need not point out how the Lord, in those spiritual manifestions, brings his redeemed people acquainted with himself. His voice in his word, and his tokens in his providences, carry very sure marks with them of his divine presence. Sometimes he comes to comfort the soul under distresses: sometimes, to sanctify the soul in her spiritual enjoyments. Often he may be heard, when

exercises come across the mind to thwart the child of God. And not unfrequently his presence is discoverable, by the relief unexpectedly brought in time of need. But in all, the redeemed and regenerated believer finds a certain somewhat, to shew who it is, and like the spouse, in the Canticles, is enabled to say: "It is the voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills." (Song ii. 8.)

Let me then, in conclusion, beg the reader (if so be the Lord hath brought him acquainted with himself) to be always on the look out for the spiritual manifestations of the Lord. And I would recommend him to be very chary in prizing them as the highest tokens of the Lord's love, during the whole life of faith, until faith is lost in sight; and the curtain, which now obstructs the full and open vision of the Lord, is withdrawn; and "we see him as He is, and know, even as we are known."

According to my apprehension of divine things, no thing is more evident than that this manifestation of the Lord, to John, in the isle of Patmos, was meant as a token that his people might expect to have the same assurances of his love, if not in the same open *bodily* appearance as then, yet in an equally *spiritual* revelation of himself to them, during the whole time-state of the church, until he come again in the clouds to judgment. Those words of our most glorious Christ are very express to the purpose; and should be frequently in the recollection of all awakened and regenerated souls: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.) And very sure I am, that there is not a child of God, who is truly the object and subject of divine grace, but who may discover this most sweet and precious promise, continually proved and realized in his own life of faith. And if it were not so, why did the Lord promise it? Wherefore is it handed down to the church to the present hour? And wherefore, but to remind

his people of his grace, in this particular towards them, and that they might remind him of it; and ask for the fulfilment of it, day by day: as He said, by his servant the prophet: "Thus saith the Lord God: I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." (Ezek. xxxvi. 37.)

And let me only add, by way of encouragement on this subject, this farther consideration; that every spiritual manifestation of our most glorious Lord, *here*, is a sure pledge of what ere long will be the one everlasting and uninterrupted display of himself, to his whole mystical body in glory for *ever*. The Lord Jesus Christ is the visible Jehovah, "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily." And as he is the sole executor of all the purposes of Jehovah, in his Trinity of persons, both to his church, and to his whole creation in time; so will he be the One glorious Object, in whom, and by whom, all communion will be made with God, to all eternity. And when we have done with this world, and all the dying concerns which belong to it; dropping this body of flesh, which now so much interrupts and damps our spiritual enjoyments; and disembodied as we shall then be, and no longer the subjects of sin or sorrow; no fear, like that of John, at the sight of Christ, will cause us, like him, to fall at Christ's feet as dead; but we shall hear with holy joy the glorious proclamation, which he will then make of himself; and feel all the blessedness of it in full enjoyment; "I am Alpha and Omega: the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come; the Almighty!"

I close this volume with thanksgiving, to my most gracious God, who hath carried me through it; and with affection to his people. The Lord give his blessing to it, and cause the sweet savour of his name to be upon it, "as ointment poured forth." Amen. (Song i. 3.)

# SCRIPTURE EXTRACTS,

ACCOMPANIED WITH

# NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS,

FROM SOME OF THE MOST STRIKING HISTORICAL PARTS OF

# HOLY SCRIPTURE.

## PART II.

# PREFACE.

When this little Work was first purposed to be published, no more, in point of bulk, was intended than a single volume: And this intimation was, in truth, implied from the request sent with it in the Preface: namely, that it might be permitted to lie on the table or in the window of private families; or in the more public situation of an inn, to meet the eye of one or another passing by, to whom the Lord might, by his blessing upon it, render it useful. That a *second* volume hath followed, is to be ascribed to the partiality with which the *first* hath been received: a large impression of which having been disposed of, and a new edition called for, before this second volume went to press.

The author, as on the former occasion, so on the present, implores the Lord's blessing on both. And if the work be found to minister in the Lord's hand, to the Lord's glory, in the spiritual benefit of the Lord's people, a renewed testimony will be thereby given, that the Lord's strength is made perfect in human weakness; and the Lord's own words be very blessedly fulfilled: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Zechariah iv. 6.)

THE

# *VISION OF THE PATRIARCH*

# JACOB, AT BETHEL.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.

"Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban, thy mother's brother.

"And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people,

"And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee and to thy seed with thee, that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham." (Gen. xxviii. 1—4.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It is among the most delightful of all considerations, that the church of our most glorious Christ, and every individual of that church, in all that we have, and in all that we are; yea, and in all that we ever shall be, to all eternity; is only as we are in Christ. The everlasting love of the Holy Three in One, "which bear record in heaven," to the persons of the Lord's people, is, as they are in him.

There is no blessing out of Christ. All blessings are in Christ. "Men shall be blessed in him." (Psalm lxxii. 17.) "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." (Col. i. 19.) And it is said that "of his fulness have all we received and grace for grace." (John i. 16.) And I speak with all possible reverence when I say, that Jehovah in his Trinity of persons could not love or behold any object with complacency and delight, but as that object is related to, and accepted in, the Lord Jesus Christ. For to this purport is the whole tenour of Scripture. It is said to be, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Eph. i. 6.)

And it is very blessed, when the redeemed and regenerated child of God is brought into a personal knowledge of, and acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ. For then, "having an unction from the holy one, to know all things;" (1 John ii. 20.) when at any time treading on Scripture-ground, he acquires (what can only be learnt spiritually) an apprehension how that love of Jehovah in his Trinity of persons, hath been manifested from everlasting to his people, "chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world;" this opens to him a continual source of holy joy. He beholds a thousand instances of that love marked in each page of the lives of the Lord's chosen; yea, and in his own life also, which, before the Lord brought him acquainted with himself, he knew not. Every child of God, even the whole election of grace, during the days of their unregeneracy, live, and are living, alike, in a total unconsciousness of it. And although they are all the while, and have been, both the objects and the subjects of everlasting love, yet, until brought out of nature's darkness into God's marvellous light, they are wholly ignorant of their high estate in Christ. The love of God, like a mighty

river, hath been running from all eternity; and the sweet streams of it in numberless ways, both in nature and in providence; yea, and in preventing and restraining grace also; have been flowing in upon them in various directions. But both the source and the cause are alike hidden from their darkened view. They receive indeed the gifts, but they discern not the Giver. The Lord's mercies come constant as the morning; but the Lord's hand is obscured to their sight, in a cloud of his own bounties. But at length when the day-spring from on high hath visited them; (and as the Scripture beautifully expresseth it) "the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared," then is discovered, both the source of all their blessings, and their unworthiness when receiving of them; and they then see that "not by works of righteousness, (as one confessed, and all know) which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed upon us abundantly through Jesus, our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus iii. 4—7.)

These truths are exemplified, more or less, in the life of every individual member of Christ's mystical body. But the Holy Ghost, in his glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ, hath been pleased to bring forward in his sacred Scriptures, many illustrious instances of the kind in the history of the Lord's people, and marked, in one and another of their lives, the prominent features of sovereign mercy displayed towards them, both while in their original state of nature, and when in their after state recovered by grace.

Among the many, that of the patriarch Jacob, stands eminently conspicuous. His life hath been remarkable even from his birth. And indeed before

his birth the Lord had made a revelation to his mother, in answer to her prayer, of the gracious purposes of the Lord towards him. Though in the ordinations of the Lord, it was so appointed, that Jacob should be the younger brother; yet the Lord declared that he should have the pre-eminency to birth-right. "The elder (said the Lord) shall serve the younger." (Gen. xxvi. 21—23.) And the Lord was farther pleased by the ministry of his servants, the prophet Malachi, in the Old Testament, and the apostle Paul, in the New, to declare, that this choice of Jacob, and the rejection of Esau, had respect to an higher concern than that of mere rank, or the gifts of earthly possessions. (See Mal. i. 2—5. Rom. ix.10.)

But the revelation of this distinguishing grace to Jacob himself, in the everlasting love of God in Christ, appears to have been reserved for the period to which the Scripture refers, on his arrival at Bethel. Here it was, the visions of God began with this man, and opened to him the word of God, in a full display of the divine glory. Here it was, in this memorable spot, that the Lord brought the patriarch personally and savingly into a knowledge of himself. And here commenced, by the medium of a vision, that acquaintance between the Lord and the patriarch, which taught Jacob of the grace shewn him, in having a being in Christ, and a well-being in Christ; and which, by sovereign decree, took place "before the world began."

The Scripture, in relation to this great event, as appears by the introduction of this chapter, speaks of it in the most striking manner. Isaac, the father of Jacob, is here sending away his younger son, in order that he might escape the wrath of his elder brother Esau. And in this dismission, he gave him a strict injunction not to form any alliance with the daughters of Canaan. I stay not to consider this part of the

subject. For although in respect to the patriarch's history, as connected with the church, the charge would furnish much room for improvement; yet upon the present occasion, limited as this little work necessarily must be within a small compass, I am constrained to pass all minor considerations, in order to give the more attention to such as are of an higher and more imperative nature. I shall therefore bring forward no more of the general history of Jacob, than what may serve to illustrate this interesting view proposed of him when at Bethel. For here we find ample materials for the most pleasing and profitable meditation; and in which, the subject, explained and illustrated as it now is by the gospel, riseth to such a magnificence of infinite importance as leaves at a vast distance every other of a secondary and subordinate kind.

I begin with requesting the reader's attention to the Scripture itself, in relation to the blessing with which Isaac blessed Jacob. He calls it "the blessing of Abraham." And he said: "God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people. And give thee the blessing of Abraham to thee, and to thy seed with thee, that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham."

Now let the reader observe the very striking manner of expression here used. "The blessing of Abraham." Why? the Lord gave Abraham a thousand blessings, in things of nature and providence; yes, but here is one *specific, special, personal* blessing. "The blessing of Abraham." So that it is not the common blessing of natural affection which Isaac meant, and which many parents like Isaac, bestow upon their children. But in fact, it is that special, personal blessing, which comes not within the province of any parents to bestow. It is the Lord's gift

and not man's. And Isaac spake of it only in a way of prophecy, as that special blessing which God had given to Abraham, and also to Isaac, and now to Jacob. It was not what Isaac simply wished might come to pass; but what God had sworn to perform. And hence he calls it by way of emphasis, and in a distinguishing manner—the blessing of Abraham.

I intreat the reader not to overlook this, because it is the very hinge on which all that followed in the patriarch's life turned. It was a sure blessing; a fixed, unalterable blessing; and had not the smallest dependance for fulfilment in the will or pleasure of Isaac. And herein it differed from all other blessings. For all that the fondest earthly father can do is but to wish well to his children. He hath no power to make them so. Nature's feelings, in her highest charities, can arise no higher than nature. In every instance therefore, the father's blessing is rather to be considered what he hopes for his children,—not that he can bless them; rather what he desires, than what he wills; for he can will nothing absolutely for them; and especially things of a spiritual nature.

And that Isaac himself had a clear apprehension of those truths, is very evident from what he said upon the occasion. For, with all the partiality he had for his eldest son Esau, to whom his natural fondness would have prompted him, had he dared it, to have given Jacob's blessing; yet when he discovered the unalterable purpose of God herein, he attempted it no more. And when Esau cried out; "Hast thou but one blessing my father? Isaac knowing that there is but this one, even Christ, and who is comprehensive of every other; the tender affection of Isaac induced him to look round, and see what temporal gifts, by way of softening, was left him to give to his son Esau. "Thy dwelling (said he to him) shall be

the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven from above. And by the sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother. And it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." (Gen. xxvii. 38—40.)

I pray the reader to observe, that there is not one word said of any thing of a spiritual nature. The fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven, but not the blessing of the Lord of the whole earth, nor of the God of heaven. Herein indeed is contained the vast distinction. The Lord's blessing, the blessing of Abraham, is the whole pith, the marrow of all blessings. And as it marked all the difference then between Jacob and Esau, so is it equally manifested in the present day. While the spiritual seed of Jacob sit down to the full enjoyment of all spiritual blessings in Christ, the Esaus content themselves in their temporal domains in the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven. And in what a multitude of instances, as Isaac prophesied, have they herein the dominion! So Lord, let it be. And let none of thy spiritual children glean in their fields. The Lord hath said to his people: "Thy bread shall be given, and thy water shall be sure."—Enough with Christ. (Isaiah xxxiii. 16.)

But we must not stop here. For in order to enter into the full scriptural sense and meaning of the blessing of Abraham, and the immense events folded up in the bosom of it from all eternity, and reaching forward to all eternity, we must trace back the subject, not only to the very first ages of the world, but before the world was made; and behold in the person of our most glorious Christ, the whole comprehended in him, when from everlasting he stood up at the call of Jehovah in his Trinity of persons, the glorious head, husband, and representative of his body the church, "the fulness of him which filleth all in all."

It is blessed, yea, very blessed, to behold the Son of God, in this glorious and endearing character. For when God the Father, as his own personal act, chose Christ to be the head of his body the church, he chose the church also in Christ. Hence Christ and his church are one. And the church hath all communicable holiness, blessedness, happiness, and glory in him. The church is said to have given to her eternal life; but all in Christ. And to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, but all in Christ. And this is the blessing of Abraham. So then, the blessing is Christ himself; his glorious person, and his Almighty work of salvation. Himself, and all his fulness, suitableness, and all-sufficiency made over to the church, by covenant engagements from Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in Jesus Christ. And hence we hear our glorious Christ, in the days of his flesh, when speaking to his Father, he saith; "That I should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me. And the Lord adds: And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given them; that they may be one even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." (John. xvii. 2. 22, 23.)

And this explains to us the wonderful subject, as we trace it all along from the very first dawn of revelation, in the garden of Eden, all down to gospel days; and through the whole of the eventful, mysterious subject, in the person, incarnation, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the coming of the Holy Ghost. From the first promise which came in with the fall, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head;" (Gen. iii. 15.) and which seed was Christ, we behold in regular succession from age to age, the

whole uniformly carried on, marking the chosen in Christ, through every generation. Hence the promise ran in those words: "the blessing of Abraham." For thus we read: "Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy Father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation. And I will bless thee, and make thy name great: and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. xii. 1—3.) And in farther confirmation of the same, at a subsequent revelation made to the patriarch, the Lord said: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee the land wherein thou art a stranger." (Gen. xvii. 7, 8.) And which are in part the very same words with which Isaac blessed Jacob, when in a way of prophecy, he pronounced the blessing. And thus the same is emphatically marked, as the blessing God promised Abraham, and his seed after him, to all the successive generations of the church. I stay not to quote passages in proof: but I pray the reader, by way of establishing in his own mind, under grace, the glorious truth, to consult the following Scriptures:—Gen. xlix. 25, 26. Deut. xxxiii. 1. 13. 1 Chron. iv. 10. Psa. cxxxiii. 3. Isa. xxxii. 1, 2. Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

And when we look for the traces of this blessing in the times of the gospel, we perceive with what a redoubled light the glorious truth breaks out afresh after the descent of the Holy Ghost. The apostle Peter, under the Lord the Spirit's unction, speaking to the people of Israel, thus expressed it; "Ye are

the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed, shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." (Acts lii. 25, 26.) And still, if possible, in yet stronger terms God, the Holy Ghost, by the apostle Paul, when speaking of the complete redemption by Christ, expressly calls it by the very words—"The blessing of Abraham." He saith that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ. And then he adds, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." Thus identifying the person of our most glorious Lord, as the very blessing promised to Abraham, and to all the chosen seed in Christ. And what endears the whole, is the blessed confirmation the Holy Ghost gives in the same Scripture, that the whole church of Christ is alike included in it, "whether they be Jew or Greek, whether they be bond or free." For thus the Lord decidedly speaks on this grand point: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. iii. 14—20.)

If I have expressed myself plainly and scripturally on this momentous doctrine of the blessing itself; (and which I have done as briefly as possible,) I hope it will prepare the reader, under divine teaching, for the very interesting subject which follows; and which indeed ariseth out of it in the visions with which the Lord was pleased to reveal himself to the patriarch Jacob, at Bethel, on this grand doctrine. Founded in this charter of grace, all that followed in the history of Jacob, in the eventful circumstances of his checquered life; (and truly chequered they were,) owed

their importance. It was from hence the whole sprung. And the patriarch, when at any time more than ordinarily exercised, dated their origin from hence, and found relief in the assurance. (Gen. xxxi. 42.)

And it will be well for the reader, (if so be he hath tasted that the Lord is gracious) to gather instruction from the part already viewed of Jacob's history. Driven as he was from his father's house, and as a fugitive to escape his brother's wrath, he took *that* with him which *none* could take from him. Apparently, to outward view, he was in desolate circumstances. But however unconscious at the time he left home, what events were opening before him, yet the sequel shews that the Lord was following him for good; and that even this dismission from his father's house was among the "all things which work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose." (Rom. viii. 28.) True, he left Esau in possession of the good things of this life. As the favourite of his father, he had for his portion "the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven." But what are these to satisfy the soul? The way to calculate the real value of things is by what they possess the power to give. All the riches of the earth are nothing to afford comfort in relation to another world. The fallen children of Adam are alike involved in Adam's guilt, and under the like sentence to Adam's condemnation. It matters not what their other circumstances are in respect to the present state of things. The great question is, how to escape the wrath to come, and find favour with God! Surely, nothing short of the blessing of Abraham. If a man hath this as Jacob had, it is impossible for him to be miserable. If he hath not, though the whole world were his own, he is wretched in the midst of all. It is not, (as Moses beautifully

expressed it) "the precious things brought forth by the sun, neither the precious things put forth by the moon: but the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush." (Deut. xxxiii. 16. with Exod. iii. 4—8.)

I cannot dismiss this view we have already taken of this history, in relation to the blessing of Abraham, without adding a short observation more on it, respecting its infinite importance. Though the visions of God had not begun when Jacob left his father's house; and no former part of the patriarch's life gives any authority to conclude that Jacob had been before brought into a spiritual and saving knowledge of the Lord: yet, both in his instance, and in the instance of every other of the chosen seed, however unconscious they are of the Lord; there cannot be a doubt but that the Lord is conscious of them, and is everlastingly attending to their persons in a way of love. The spouse, in the Canticles, expressed this interesting truth, when she said: "I am my Beloved's, and his desire is towards me." (Song vii. 10.) And surely we may and must conclude, that our most glorious Christ had this desire for his church, and for every individual member of his church, when from everlasting he was set up as her Head and Husband, and "his delights were with the sons of men." (Prov. viii. 23—31.) And who shall say to what nameless, numberless, extensions this desire of Jesus hath reached and doth reach, in the looking forward to the fulness of time for their conversion, before their regeneracy, and in a thousand and ten thousand preventions of evil, all along when lying in the unreclaimed state of an unawakened nature!

The Holy Ghost, by his servant the prophet Isaiah, hath most graciously taught the church somewhat of what ariseth from the deposit of "the blessing of Abraham," in her, as in the instance of Jacob; while the church, like the patriarch, remained ignorant of

her safety in Christ. "Thus saith the Lord: As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith: Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sake, that I may not destroy them all." (Isa. lxv. 8.) Here under the similitude of a vine, whose grapes are apparently blasted; while a looker on saith: There is a cluster in it, where wine may be found, destroy it not, the Holy Ghost represents the state of our withered nature by the fall: but saith the Lord: Destroy it not, for in this cluster, that is the church, "the blessing of Abraham," even Christ, is found. And what but to this one cause shall be ascribed the preservation of our whole nature from instant death, from the moment of the fall? What but from Christ, the promised seed being in it? What preserved Jacob all the days of his unregeneracy unto Bethel, yea the whole body of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, in all ages, from their birth in nature to their new birth in grace? And to come nearer home: what preserved the hand of him that writes, and of him that reads these lines, (if so be the Lord hath called both by his grace) during the long season of unregeneracy; when, as the apostle speaks, "We were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures; living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." (Titus iii. 3.) Surely he that looks on, and knoweth them that are his, even Christ himself, he is the Almighty speaker; amidst all our worthlessness and unprofitableness, and sin; he saith, "Destroy it not, there is the blessing in it." Great God! To what a state is our nature sunk by the fall! Oh! what unspeakable mercies before we have the least consciousness of them do we owe to our most glorious Christ! Well might the apostle Jude, directed by the Holy Ghost, call the church, "Them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." (Jude 1.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran.

"And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep." (Gen. xxviii. 10, 11.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I DO not mean to detain the reader with many remarks on this first day's journey of the patriarch; but yet I cannot wholly pass it by unnoticed. There is somewhat truly affecting to the feelings of nature, when at any time a separation takes place among the several branches of a family. The Lord himself hath planted those affections in the human heart, and notwithstanding the fall hath made schisms in them, and our corrupt passions too often sadly make breaches among the kindest hearted brethren; yet they are not wholly effaced from the common nature of man. Here and there are left in certain characters, striking features of tenderness, to shew what that nature once was; the more affording cause to lament what it now is.

The patriarch Jacob, if we may judge from the many sorrowful sympathies which he expressed in the after stages of his life, as he entered into the afflictions of his children, possessed no small portion of those finer feelings. There were not a few of them which he retained, amidst the universal wreck of our fallen nature. And they, who like him know in themselves what such feelings are, can enter into some apprehension of what passed in Jacob's mind, in this lonely and sorrowful journey of his, when driven from his father's house. If we may credit geo-

graphers, who have marked the extent of countries, the ground which the patriarch traversed this first day's journey, from Beersheba to Bethel, was little short of *forty miles.* And however fatigued in body, and harrassed in mind, this great father of Israel had but poor accommodation when he halted. We are informed that the sun was set, when he lighted on this place. He had no lodging but the cold air. No bed but the earth: and no covering but the canopy of heaven. And in this forlorn situation, though heir of "the blessing of Abraham," Jacob lay down to sleep.

If this little book should fall into the hands of any of the Lord's exercised family, who know what grace is, let me say to such, however many and how sharp soever your temporal trials may be, surely one look at Jacob, in the situation here described, must, under the Lord's blessing, be helpful to lighten all. Never among any of the Lord's chosen ones, which we read of in holy Scripture, do we find any history more marked with continued manifestations of Divine favour than that of Jacob. Indeed he is so highly distinguished, that the church is called by is name.—Nay, more than this: for our most glorious Christ himself condescended to be so named and called, Israel. (Isa. xlix. 4.) Let the Lord's afflicted children behold the patriarch in this night at Bethel when he lay down, and therefrom learn to make a right calculation of divine providences towards his chosen. That night, that memorable night was to be ushered in with a glorious morning. But this was the process by which the gracious Lord was pleased to bless Jacob. And the seed of Jacob, of the present hour, would do well to mark it down in the memorandums of their own history. When the Lord is coming forth with more than ordinary blessings to visit his people, he not unfrequently hedges up their way with thorns, to

render his presence more manifest and enlarged to their view. When at any time he is about to hold communion with them; the kind Lord separates their intercourse with men, for the nearer drawing nigh to God. And among the sweetest moments of the Lord's people, and when he makes their cup run over, the grace is shewn for the most part, when the world and false brethren frown. Had Esau not threatened the life of Jacob, (speaking after the manner of men) Jacob would not have fled to Bethel. And who that can enter by a spiritual apprehension into Jacob's feelings, after the Lord had made himself known to him at Bethel, but must rejoice that Esau's hatred was rendered instrumental in the Lord's hand, to bring Jacob there for the Lord's blessing. True, it was a forlorn and comfortless state in which the patriarch lay down. But what a change the Lord wrought before the morning, when the Lord raised him up!

Suffer me to add under this particular, the farther consideration which ariseth out of the view of the patriarch, in this apparently desolate situation at Bethel; namely, that this is for the most part the uniform lot of all the Lord's family. What patriarch, prophet, or apostle, ever travelled any other way? Nay, what was the son of God himself, when on earth, of whom it is said; that he "had not where to lay his head?" So that the sorrowful path is a dignified path to all the Lord's people. They are indeed heirs of a kingdom which cannot be moved; but while here they are walking through a wilderness buffetted and despised. They are children of the great King, going home to their Father's house: but while going home, they are in disguise: "the world knoweth them not, because it knew him not. I think (said Paul, speaking of himself, and his few faithful companions) that God hath set forth us the apostles last as it were appointed unto death; for we are made a

spectacle unto the world, to angels and to men." (1 Cor. iv. 9.) And what bare up the mind of those champions of faith? He elsewhere tells us: "For which cause we faint not, (said Paul) but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. While we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. iv. 16—18.)

I send these observations forth among the Lord's people, on the knee of prayer, that to the various exercises of the Lord's chosen ones, the Lord's gracious dealings with Jacob at Bethel may be blessed with many a blessed Bethel-visit to all Jacob's spiritual seed. Be the night ever so dark; the state in temporal things ever so frowning; the Esaus of the present day, threatening with ever so high a hand; Oh! for grace in the trying hour to look as the prophet did, beyond the surface of the dispensation, and behold Jesus regulating and over-ruling all. (Ezek. i. 26.) For my own part, in my poor insignificant life, I have been endeavouring to watch the Lord's sovereignty, without regarding much man's intentions; and not unfrequently have found cause to conclude that the Lord is about (as in the instance of Jacob, at Bethel) to bestow some special love token upon me because the Esaus, or the Shemeis have come forth to curse me. (2 Sam. xvi. 11, 12.) It is thus our most glorious Christ enables his exercised children to extract pleasure from pain; and endear with double sweetness the blessings of his love, when made to follow the hatred of our enemies.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

"And behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

"And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I DETAIN the reader at our very entrance on the subject of Jacob's vision at Bethel, to beg of him that he will pause and remark with me, the very distinguishing nature of those visions of the night, with which the Lord was pleased not unfrequently to make revelations of himself to his people, from the lying dreams and false visions of men's own framing. The Lord, by the prophet, speaks in high terms of disapprobation, of all such which think to make the Lord's people forget his name by their dreams. (See Jer. xxiii. 25—27.) But in the early ages of the church, and before the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we find the Holy Ghost, upon a variety of occasions, making use of his ministry by dreams. I stay not to particularize, but refer the reader to those Scriptures in proof; Gen. xv, and xxxvii. And indeed, under the gospel dispensation, though for obvious reasons the Lord doth not so frequently instruct by dreams; yet it is not totally done away. The Lord, by his servant Joel, spake of the latter

day, in the pouring out of the Holy Ghost, upon his people, that the blessed event should be followed with those tokens: "Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions." (Joel ii. 28. Acts ii. 17.)

And while I am upon this subject I will venture to make another remark on the operations on the mind by the ministry of dreams, during our sleeping hours; which may serve, if not to explain, yet to confirm the facts themselves. I have indeed somewhat largely adverted to it in my *Poor Man's Concordance,* therefore I shall in this place be more brief. Though it is too generally known to need the observation, yet it may be noticed that for the most part our bodies are altogether passive and unconscious while in our slumbers what is transacting by others, whether they are near us, or whether they are remote. Not that this is always the case. For some are known to walk in their sleep. Though this is not a general thing. But with respect to the other part of the subject, that matter is universal. There can be no question but that there is somewhat *in us,* or belonging *to us,* that at times is very busily engaged, and full of activity, while the body lieth dormant. We fancy ourselves upon those occasions talking with others, and are as we then suppose talked to, ourselves. Some of whom though dead, and in our waking hours we know them to be such; yet, during our dreams, we converse with, as if living; yea and their very voices which when alive we knew, we recollect and know them by, and converse with them as familiarly as before. Add to these, we sometimes in our sleep, fancy ourselves to be travelling; often transacting business; and to our apprehensions, as earnest and intent as in the perfect use of all our senses when awake. Who shall say what it is of our nature that is so engaged, or what engageth it; how is it acted upon, and for what purpose it acts,

with numberless other questions which might be proposed connected with the subject? If then in the common circumstances of daily life, we are at a loss to account for what more or less all men know, and are alike influenced by, shall we question the capability of the Lord's communicating to his people his mind and will by the ministry of dreams, as seemeth best to his unerring wisdom? Shall it be thought incredible that the Great Father of Spirits hath access to the spirits of his creation, and imparts to them such knowledge in a way and manner as his sovereignty thinks proper?

But let us now attend to the relation which is given of this vision, manifested to the patriarch Jacob at Bethel: "Behold! a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it, and said: I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. And in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

No doubt, the leading points of this vision were well understood by the faithful followers of the Lord, from the time of Jacob, through all the intermediate ages of the church, unto the coming of our most glorious Christ. They beheld in it the outlines of him, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed; and considered it as a confirmation of the same covenant of grace made with Abraham and Isaac: and of the mediation in the accomplishment of it, by the Lord Jesus Christ. (Gen. xii. 1. 3, and xxvi. 4.) But it was reserved for Lord Jesus Christ himself, to give the full explanation of it, in the days of his flesh;

and which he hath most graciously done in his conversation with Nathaniel, as recorded in the gospel. There we learn that the representation made to the patriarch of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, did not simply mean to set forth that Christ became the medium of all communication from Jehovah, in his Trinity of persons, and in a covenant way to his people in Christ, but that Christ himself was, and is, and everlastingly must be, the sum and substance of that covenant; and the sole Executor of all the vast purposes, council, will, and thoughts of Jehovah, in all the departments of nature, providence, grace, and glory. For, by the Lord Jesus's conversation with Nathaniel on the subject, we are taught that it was not the mere ascension and descension of angels on the ladder, reaching from earth to heaven, but Christ himself: "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open; and the angels of God, ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Observe, upon the Son of man; personally Christ, and personally upon all the members in Christ; the Jacobs, the spiritual seed of Christ, in every age of the church. (John i. 45. to the end.) And I detain the reader, in attending to one or two particulars more in the gracious explanation which the Lord of life and glory hath given of this memorable vision of the patriarch, in his conversation with Nathaniel. The Son of God, before he expressed himself to this Israelite, gave him to understand that he knew that Philip had called him while he was under the fig tree. And moreover that he saw him while there; both which, Nathaniel knew were things physically impossible, had he not been God. Those wide spreading trees, and their umbrageous branches and leaves, totally precluding all sight to those without; and indeed, for the purpose of which in private communion with the Lord, the faithful believers retreated under their covering. Hence from these con-

victions, Nathaniel gave testimony to Christ, saying, "Rabbi! Thou art the Son of God! Thou art the King of Israel!"

Neither was this all. For Jesus added yet another proof; and if possible more overwhelming to Nathaniel's mind. For by adverting to the subject of Jacob's vision at Bethel, he gave this Israelite to understand that he had not only seen him while under the fig tree, and knew that Philip had called him from thence, but also how his mind had been occupied while there. And then by unfolding what Jacob had seen in vision as referring to himself; he darted into the mind of Nathaniel such powerful conviction of his own power and GODHEAD, as fully confirmed him in the glorious truth which he had just before expressed of his being the Son of God. And what a mercy was it to the whole church of God, that our most glorious Christ should thus have explained the patriarch's vision, and caused it to be recorded, and handed down from age to age, for the perpetual comfort of all the Lord's people. So then it was not Jacob only at Bethel, but all the spiritual seed of Jacob for whom this early vision was given; and what hath refreshed the church, and will continue to refresh the church in its blissful properties, until time shall be no more.

But we must not stop here: We have just glanced (and but glanced) at what the Lord shewed the patriarch at Bethel. We must now attend also to what the Lord said to him. He first proclaimed himself the patriarch's God in covenant with him, and his fathers, Abraham, and Isaac; and then added the outlines of those exceeding great and precious promises included in the gracious proclamation: "And behold! I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest; and will bring thee again to this land. For I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

Without running over a large tract of Scripture ground in confirmation of what the Lord here promised, it will be sufficient to observe, that here is comprised, more or less, all the promises of God in Christ Jesus, which are all yea, and Amen. The Lord promiseth his continual presence with his people. What a vast extent is included here! "Behold, I am with thee." And if the Lord is with me, what can be against me? The Lord promiseth the keeping of his people: "I will keep thee." What power can arise to take me from his Almighty arms? "And I will bring thee again to this land;" namely Canaan; a well known type of heaven. And to sum up all, the Lord promiseth, "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." And what hath the Lord spoken to his people of, but all "spiritual and eternal blessings in Christ Jesus!"

I pray the reader to ponder well the vast subject. Surely in this vision of our most glorious Christ, to Jacob at Bethel, we see the pledge made to all the spiritual seed of Jacob, in all ages. For wherein did this vision to Jacob, at Bethel, differ from that of the Jehovah Jirah, to Abraham, or the covenant engagements of the same Lord to Moses at the bush? Indeed, what were all the revelations which our most glorious Christ made of himself, both under the Old Testament dispensation and under the New, but to the same amount? If the Lord proclaimed himself by this glorious name of Jehovah, to the church in Egypt; if the Lord brought his people from thence into the wilderness, and went before them in the pillar of the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night: if the Lord commanded the brazen serpent to be lifted up in the wilderness; if the Lord fed his people with manna, or caused the flinty rock to give out water to his people, his chosen; what were all these, and

numberless other tokens of love to the same effect, but to testify, by these shadowy representations all ministering to one and the same glorious substance; all pointing to Christ; and in him they had their completion. What the Lord said to Jacob at Bethel, was in fact equally said through the whole dispensation: "I am the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob." God in covenant with his people. And what is it now, under the New Testament, but the same? Every ordinance of the gospel, and all the several means of grace, which God the Holy Ghost, hath instituted in his church, all set forth Christ. He is the sum and substance of all types, shadows, and figures. And I pause for the moment to remark, (and the importance of the subject renders it a matter of the highest concern to remark,) with what a world of apparatus, the Lord the Spirit, the Almighty founder of the church, and of all Holy Scripture, hath introduced through all the periods of the church, antecedent to Christ's coming, the glorious gospel of the ever blessed God. Looking to the Old Testament dispensation through the medium of the New, we behold as plainly as words can make it, that the whole had but one and the same object in view; namely, to introduce to the spiritual apprehension of his people, our most glorious Christ. For whether the Lord spake by dreams or by visions; by urim or by thummim: all had reference to Him, as so many rays of light converging to one centre. The whole is summed up, and completed in that one glorious person; "the fulness of him which filleth all in all."

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.

"And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

We have here the account given by the Holy Ghost, of the first impressions wrought on Jacob's mind, as soon as he awoke from sleep. First impressions of grace are strong impressions. And as they are the prelude to all the communications from the Lord, in the after-days of grace; so are they for the most part the most durable and lasting. Jacob never lost sight of them through the whole of his eventful pilgrimage. Yea, we discover that they arose fresh to his recollection in his dying hours. For we read that he expressed himself concerning them to his son Joseph, just before his departure: "God Almighty, (said he) appeared unto me, at Luz, (that is Bethel) in the land of Canaan, and blessed me. The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk. The God which fed me all my life long unto this day. The angel which redeemed me from all evil." (Gen. xlviii. 3. 15, 16.)

If the reader in his own history, through sovereign grace, knoweth any thing of these soul transactions, he will at once readily enter into the patriarch's feelings. Those of the Lord's people, who have been blessed with Bethel visits, like Jacob, will, like him, be very chary of them, and prize them more than their necessary food. And not unfrequently like him, in numberless instances of the Lord's people, the first love-calls of grace have been known to revive in the recollection of dying saints, with such special manifestations from the Lord, as to brighten up the countenance, when the clay-cold hand of death has seized upon the whole frame; and the wheel of life,

(as Solomon describes it) "is broken at the cistern." (Eccles. xii. 6.) It was under the revivings of the soul, that Jacob "gathered up his feet into the bed, as he yielded up the ghost, and cried out, I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!" (Gen. xlviii. 18.) And in modern times, numberless are the instances, where the redeemed and regenerated of the Lord, have sung their love songs to our most glorious Christ, in death; and by the strength of faith given them in the Lord, have seen themselves sitting down *in* Christ, before the Lord Jesus hath come to take them up to sit for ever *with* Christ.

But while I say thus much, let me be not misunderstood; as if such manifestations, either in the first awakenings of grace, or in the after prelude to everlasting glory, were in the general possession of all the Lord's people, or were essential to their state of salvation before God. Not so. Very blessed as it is, to be so favoured of the Lord; yet in those instances where the Lord's people have not such sensible enjoyments, the testimonies of regeneration and the renewed life, are not unfrequently equally certain, though not attended with equally brilliant displays. The new birth is more to be judged by effects than by manifestations of the cause; more by what follows, than by what is then shewn. The Lord's sovereignty is alike made known in all. In general, where great discoveries are made of the divine favour, by more open revelations of it, there is found a greater necessity for it. When the Lord puts on his holy armour on his people, then it may be concluded, such as are thus accoutered with arms, will be called more signally to battle. The patriarch Jacob, driven into exile from his father's house, needed some more gracious manifestation from the Lord, to shew that his presence was with him. This was the time of Jacob's trouble. And the Lord tempered his strength to his day.

But in cases less striking, we may form conclusions, as we would judge in other things, of causes by their effects. If the reader be anxious to know when the visions of God began with him, the answer is at hand; and the Holy Scriptures with one voice proclaim the blessed truth. Then it was, when like the patriarch Jacob, you first viewed your own helpless, and hopeless state by nature, and the infinite preciousness and suitability of the Lord Jesus Christ. When like the ladder, you beheld the Son of God coming down from heaven to make known upon earth the free, full, and finished salvation of God in Christ. When from convictions of sin, you feel convictions of Christ's righteousness. This was Jacob's Bethel. This was Paul's, no less in the road to Damascus. And this is the same gracious revelation, which in every instance is made known to the redeemed and regenerated child of God, when the Lord calls his people "from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto the living God."

One sweet and most interesting reflection, I must add, ariseth from this vision of Jacob at Bethel: namely, that in all those original manifestations of the Lord to his people, they themselves are altogether passive in them; and neither can, nor do, contribute an atom towards them. Never surely could a poor soul, when he lay down to sleep, be less conscious than Jacob was of his own want of salvation: and never did any rise up again in a more refreshed and strengthened state of grace than Jacob did on the first morning of his regeneration. Now in all this he himself was wholly inactive, and entirely wrought upon. So is it with all the Lord's people in regeneration. The new nature and the spiritual life, are wholly gifted from the Lord. A child in the common birth of the original Adam-state, might as well be supposed to contribute toward his own creation, as

the child of grace in the new birth of the Spirit. There are many effects which follow in spiritual life, as there are many which spring out of natural life; and which prove that there is life in both departments; but the cause of both is wholly out of ourselves, and wholly in the Lord. The Holy Scripture states this, in relation to the new birth, with the usual clearness of precision, when it saith, "they are born, not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John i. 13.)

It would be a subject to call up the unceasing wonder, adoration, love and praise of the whole church of God, in every individual instance, could it be ascertained, how, and when, the Lord brings about his eternal purpose in the moment of conversion, when the Lord manifests himself to his people, "otherwise than he doeth to the world." Some he brings under the word, his ordinances and means of grace, in his house of prayer. To others, he sends the word; and not unfrequently to them that enquired not after him. Many are called out of darkness into God's marvellous light, by awakening providences; trouble, sickness in themselves, or death in their friends, or household. And thus, like Jacob, they are brought into the wilderness, that amidst wilderness dispensations, the Lord may give them, like him, unasked and unthought of, Bethel blessings; and there "speak comfortably to them." (Hosea ii. 14, 15.) But in all these, and every other the sweet, the gracious communications, wholly begin on the part of God. We can say nothing to the Lord, either in a way of prayer or praise, until the Lord hath first spoken to us in a way of grace and love. (1 John iv. 19.) We are therefore altogether passive in the first reception of the new life, as we are in the birth of nature. And very fully proved, in all the gifts of grace, is that divine declaration of our Lord, where he saith: "I

am found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest to them that asked not after me." (Isa. lxv. 1. with Romans x. 30.)

One improvement more is suggested to us from the vision of Jacob at Bethel; namely, that when in the first paroxysms of astonishment the patriarch awoke from sleep, and pondered over the gracious manifestations the Lord had made to him during that season; he cried out, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." Now from hence we learn, that our most glorious Christ may be, and indeed is, very near his people, while they are alike unconscious of his presence or his favour. Yea, and amidst all the numberless, nameless, blessings he is for ever bestowing upon us while in the unawakened state of nature, our spiritual faculties incapable then of vision are neither sensible of the graciousness of his gifts, nor of the love of the more gracious Giver.

Oh! what a subject to melt the soul in the review would the life of every individual child of God furnish, could it be brought in one full prospect before him; when like Jacob, the eye was spiritually opened, the ear spiritually unstopped, to take into one view all the way the Lord our God hath brought his people; and to hear what the Lord had been speaking to them, "to humble them, and to prove them, and to shew them what was in their heart." And of all histories, than the child of God's own history, when enlightened to the perusal of it, nothing can be more affecting. The youngest in the walk of faith cannot have gone very far, without beholding causes for setting up many a monumental inscription; that here the Lord appeared for him, and there his grace was sufficient for him. And among those of riper years, to trace back the subject from the earliest dawn of spiritual life, through the spring and summer, to the autumn of our days, and mark down, one by one, the

buddings, blossoms, and fruits of the Spirit; testifying, in the garden of the Lord, that his people are "trees of the Lord's right hand planting." Oh! who but as he traversed the sacred inclosure and beholding all the way the gracious Lord had nurtured and watched over him for good, amidst all his ignorance and waywardness, but would feel the full sense of the patriarch's words: "Surely the Lord was in this place, and I knew it not!"

And if I may venture to add my personal testimony to a subject of this interesting nature; advanced as I now am to the verge of life, and daily walking on the confines of time, and drawing near to eternity; truly, can I take up the same language as the patriarch, and from the same cause. To what the Lord hath said by his servant the prophet, including his watchful care over his people, through all the stages of their warfare, I can fully subscribe: "Hearken unto me, (saith the Lord) O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which have been borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb. And even to your old age, I am he; and and even to hoar hairs will I carry you. I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." (Isaiah xl. 3, 4.)

I add no more, but a prayer to the Lord, that we may be enabled to make the same conclusion as the church was called upon to do, after a long and beautiful description of the Lord's goodness to the church, as recorded in that lovely Psalm: "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things; even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." (Psalm cvii. 43.)

# THE SPIES

## RETURNED WITH THEIR REPORT FROM SEARCHING

# THE PROMISED LAND.

### HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

"Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.

"And Moses by the commandment of the Lord, sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were the heads of the children of Israel.

"So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hammath.

"And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs.

"And they returned from searching of the land after forty days." (Numb. xiii. 1—3. 21. 23. 25.)

### NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It is very blessed, when under Divine teaching, we are enabled to receive from spiritual and scriptural testimonies, suitable apprehensions of the wonderful properties of faith. In all the characters recorded of the Old Testament saints, or of the New

Testament believers, this gifted grace of God shines with greater or less lustre, according to the different degrees with which the Lord was pleased to impart strength to his people for the exercise of it.

There are but few things in the word of God which, by way of more eminent distinction, are called *precious;* and faith is one of them. We read of the "preciousness of Christ;" (1 Pet. ii. 7.) of the "precious blood of Christ;" (1 Pet. i. 19.) and of the exceeding "great and precious promises," which are given us in Christ; and whereby "we are made partakers of the divine nature." (2 Pet. i. 4.) And faith is added to the number; and the trial of it is said to be more "precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire." (1 Pet. i. 7.) And the reason is obvious. For according to Holy Scripture, this blessed gift of our most blessed God is that grace which above all others, when brought into exercise, and found sterling, separates the *precious* from the *vile;* the *sheep* from the *goats;* and "the man that serveth God, from him that serveth him not." It was this principle which distinguished the true spies from the false, when returned with their different report, from searching the promised land. They who honoured God, in giving him the credit of God, and brought back a good report of the fertile country; thus honouring God's name, God honoured their faith; and God assured them that they should "enter into his rest." Whereas they who honoured him not, but brought back an evil report upon the good land, and dared to call in question God's faithfulness, "their carcases fell in the wilderness." (Heb. iii. 17.)

I pray the reader to have this in view concerning both, while going over the interesting history proposed to us in this Scripture; and never if possible to lose sight of it. For what can be equally animating, when under divine teaching, we contemplate the his-

tory of those holy men of old, "of whom the world was not worthy?" We behold those heroes in grace, "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." (Heb. xi. 33, 34.) And the gracious instruction we derive from such views of the faithful gone before, not only acts by way of stimulus, to animate the mind when we behold ourselves "encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," but we take part also in their history as our own. In going over the Scripture records of those ages that are past; we do, to all intents and purposes, realize them now; yea as if but of yesterday; and bring them down to gospel times. Hence we catch a somewhat of the same principle which actuated them, while we read of theirs. We feel a somewhat of what they felt; and while running the race that is set before us, the Lord the Spirit inclines our souls to look as they did, to "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." And but for this, when reading the honourable testimony by the Holy Ghost to the Lord's faithful ones, in such illustrious examples of faith; those saints of God, under the Old Testament dispensation, would, and do, shame those of the New. For if instead of imitating the true spies, in their faithful report of the Lord and his promises, we lean to the conduct of the unfaithful in the congregation, we become so many *pillars of salt*, like Lot's wife; not being "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Heb. vi. 12.)

And as a farther encouragement to this exercise, under the Lord's teaching, I would beg to add a short observation more before we enter upon the history itself, proposed to us in this Scripture; namely,

that this is the very purpose the Holy Ghost had in view, and for which those Scriptures were given to the church. For when, by his servant the apostle Paul, the Lord had stated some of the outlines of Israel's history in the wilderness, both of those that were spiritually fed and taught; and of others which mingled with them, but were not of them, called indeed, Israel, but not the true Israel of God, and who were overthrown in the wilderness; the Lord adds: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." (1 Cor. x. 1. 11.)

And I have often admired upon this occasion, the very striking manner in which God the Holy Ghost hath manifested his love to the church: and endeared himself to his people by this very process, in shewing the riches of his grace. He hath so pointedly directed to the persons of his people, when at any time speaking of the love and favour the Holy Three in One bear to the chosen in Christ, as so many letters personally and specially sent to them, and to them only. The manner of expression is to this amount in the whole of Scripture; and if examined under all their bearings, it will be found pointing to the church of Christ, not unsimilar to Paul's application of the sermon which he then preached under the immediate unction and dictation of the Holy Ghost, at Antioch: "Men and brethren, (said the apostle,) children of the stock of Abraham; and whosoever among you feareth God: to you is the word of this salvation sent." (Acts xiii. 2—26.) We have a beautiful illustration also of the same, in the opening of the second Epistle of Peter. He thus speaks: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus

Christ." (2 Pet. i.) Or as the words might have been better rendered ; "in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." (As any one by a reference to the original Scripture will easily perceive.)

Now nothing can be more palpable and evident than that all that have obtained this *precious faith* (as Peter calls it) have alike obtained it ; let the different proportions of faith in them, or their reception of it, be what they may. And for this plain reason ; Because what is obtained is not through the receiver's merit, but Christ's righteousness. Not our apprehension of it, but what it really is. So that our most glorious Christ, who is the great object of faith ; is always in himself one and the same object of faith ; and is alike seen as that glorious object by all. The preciousness of this glorious object not being more or less, according to the different degrees of our faith in him, which the Lord's people possess ; but what the Lord is. Hence, whether, the believer that beholds him, as the glorions object of faith, is a babe, or child in Christ, or one advanced in the divine life, a young man, or father, (as John denominates the various ages of believers ; John ii. 13, 14.) this diversity in the degree of faith makes no difference in the glorious object of faith ; but the whole church, which by regeneration, or the new birth, hath obtained this precious faith, hath alike obtained it. The apostle Peter, writing to the church, makes no account of the weakness or strength of the believer's faith, but includes the whole church : "To them that have obtained like precious faith with us." (The apostles) And our most glorious Lord himself, when giving his statement of faith, very graciously called it the same ; that the child of God, who possessed no more faith than "a grain of mustard seed," yet as the great object of his faith was the sole cause ; and not the greater or lesser degree of that faith in himself, any

thing more than the effect; he might remove a mountain. (Matt. xvii. 20.) And the Holy Ghost, by Paul, confirms the same blessed truth, when he saith, that "the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ Jesus, is unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference." (Rom. iii. 22.)

I have made these preliminary observations to the history before us, and as introductory, for the better apprehension of it, because in the instance of the true spies, distinguished from the false ones, the Lord the Spirit hath pointed them out to us under those two great branches of character, without stating any precise measure of diversity in the faith of those which believed, from those which believed not. And I do very humbly conceive that there needs no more in every age of the church, to ascertain the Lord's people from the ungodly. The smallest degree of faith, (to use our Lord's own beautiful similitude) though but as a grain of mustard seed, is faith. The drop of dew on the leaf of a flower, or on the spire of the grass, is as truly water as the ocean. The quantity doth not determine its nature, but the quality. And the slender faith of a new-born child of God, proves that child to be as truly united to Christ, the spiritual vine, as the largest branch of the vine. And it is very blessed to consider farther, that according to the authority of God the Holy Ghost, my possessing, or your possessing, faith in Christ, can be the result of nothing less than the *effect* originating from this one glorious *cause;* namely, that God the Father did from everlasting, choose us in Christ; God the Son did from everlasting marry our persons and redeem us, in this time state, from all the ruins of the fall; and God the Holy Ghost hath quickened us from the death of sin, and made us partakers of the renewed life. Hence therefore, the proof of that blessed Scripture: "As many as were ordained to eternal

life, believed." (Acts xiii. 48.) And it is the sweetest and most encouraging of all thoughts, that as our most glorious Christ is the sole object of all faith; so "by him, all that believe," be their faith slender or strong; little or great; they are all alike "justified from all things." (Acts xiii. 39.) It was not the littleness of faith in the untrue spies, but the total want of all faith which condemned them, and called forth the displeasure of Almighty God; and for which the Lord sware "that they should not enter into his rest." (Heb. iii. 18.)

Let us now prosecute the history before us; and these fundamental truths in relation to faith will appear in their proper colours. The chapter opens with a comment from the Lord to Moses, to send men that they might search the land of Canaan. And it is said that Moses, by the command of the Lord, did so. And they went up and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin, unto Rehob. And that they returned after searching the land for forty days. But if we compare Scripture with Scripture, (as upon every occasion in relation to the church, and on all spiritual things we are enjoined, 1 Cor. ii. 13.) on looking at the account of the church's history on this subject, in the opening of the Book of Deuteronomy, we there find, that about a year before this dismission of the spies to search the land, the Lord had directed the people to go up at once, and take possession of it. (See Deut. i. 6—8.) And Moses, the man of God, in the same chapter, complained of their then rebellion, in not obeying the Lord, by immediately going to the possession. They then proposed to send spies, with which Moses was angry. What a sovereign act of grace was it then in our most gracious God, that now, after the interval of nearly a year, the Lord himself should not only consent to their wishes, but himself command it. And Moses, it is said,

was well pleased with the proposal. (See Deut. i. 21, 22.)

And it should seem moreover, than with an eye to both these purposes, Moses made choice of those that were rulers in Israel, to go on those services, as being best calculated to judge of the delightful nature of the country, and the Lord's grace, in his promises of giving the land to his people; would all bring back such a favourable report as might stimulate their hearts to go up immediately to the possession. They could have no one cause whatever of fear. They had seen the Lord's hand displayed in numberless instances towards them, both while in Egypt, and when the Lord had brought them out of it. They had been led to the borders of the Red Sea, and the Lord had opened a path for them in the mighty waters. Yea, the very deep, which the Lord had made a passage of safety to them, became the grave of destruction to the enemies which pursued them. This they had seen, and in their hymns of salvation sung of it, in glory to the Lord And in the moment of their joy, they exulted in the victory, accepting it as a sure token and pledge from the Lord, of their conquest of Canaan. All the nations around, (said they) "shall hear and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. The dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Israel trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased." (Exod. xv. 14—16.)

To this victory over Egypt, and the total destruction of Pharoah and his host, at the Red Sea, the Lord had added another signal display of his Almighty arm. For soon after, when Amalek, (ano-

ther foe of our most glorious Christ, and his people) came forth to oppose them at Rephidim; though Israel had dared to remonstrate with Moses, for want of water there; and the Lord had commanded water for them in the most improbable and unlikely manner, even from the rock; which, in the apprehension of human means was impossible; yet here again the Lord appeared for them; and discomfited Amalek before them; and declared that "the Lord would have war with Amalek, from generation to generation, until that he had put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." (Exod. xvii. throughout.)

The children of Israel had seen all these things; had heard the Lord's gracious declarations concerning them; had found God a faithful God, in all that was past; and had had his firm assurance for all that was to come; he had granted the symbol of his daily presence with them; going before them in the pillar of a cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night; had not only provided for their every want, but even caused the very obstructions which seemed to oppose their way to move from before them, and in his appearing for them in the removal, had made all opposition ultimately to minister the more to his glory, and their greater happiness. All these tokens were in their view; and yet now, when the Lord, after such signal victories over Egypt and Amalek, had assured them of their conquest of Canaan; yea, they themselves had sung their songs of victory, as if the battle had been already won; wished to send spies as scouts to discover the coast of the enemy, and could not trust God without it! The gracious long-suffering Lord, it appears by the history, had passed by their proposal at the first; as if the Lord would suffer them to ponder over it; and now, himself, after some time had elapsed, commanded Moses to do

what they before had desired. And as Moses chose among the wisest of the people persons for this service; had they made the Lord their confidence, and spied out the land in dependance upon him, their favourable report would have been to the glory of the Lord, and the encouragement of the people; and their former unworthiness and distrust the Lord would have over-ruled by his grace for their good. But the same dreadful distrust and unbelief as the sequel of the subject proves, manifests that nothing short of God's sovereignty in grace, can subdue the natural atheism of the human mind.

We shall discover the truth of this as we prosecute the history. But I would desire to pause here for the moment to make a short remark on what we have already observed. The question of the Holy Ghost, by the apostle, meets us in this place; for in the review of Israel's history, we see but too sad a resemblance of our own. "Are we better than they? (it is demanded) No: in no wise. For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written: There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Rom. iii. 9—12.)

And what were the deliverances from Egypt and Amalek, compared to our deliverances from the bondage of sin and Satan? What were the dangers of Pharoah and his host; or the wars of Amalek, and the opposition of all that Israel had to encounter, in comparison of the helpless, hopeless state of the fallen, ruined condition of our nature by the Adam apostacy, when the Lord opened for his church and people, a new and living way in his blood; and has promised to bruise Satan, as Amalek, under our feet

shortly? And although we have received, and do receive, day by day, as Israel of old did, assurances of God's love, yet how often do we find our hearts going forth in questioning whether the Lord will be our God, in this blessing, or in that mercy?

I admire the grace of God in favouring the spies with liberty of searching the land unmolested. For had not the Lord, by his preventing mercy, over-ruled the circumstances of this journey, surely the inhabitants of Canaan, who were before jealous of Israel's coming, would have fallen upon them, and destroyed them. It is not to be accounted for on common principles how they escaped. But here, as in a thousand instances, when the Lord preserves or hides his people, he manifests himself. And the gathering of the fruit of the country unseen, or unforbidden, by the men of Canaan, is another decided proof of the Lord's care over them. For we are told, "that when they came unto the brook of Eshcol, they cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates and of the figs."

I cannot pass away from this relation of the grapes, pomegranates, and figs of Eshcol, without detaining the reader with a short observation: For there is in my view, beside the historical subject itself, somewhat of an higher signification. And while it shews the delicious fruit of Canaan *naturally*, it serves to illustrate the riches and fulness of Christ, and of his fruit, sweet to our taste *spiritually*, in that better country, of which the earthly Canaan was but a type.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the true spiritual Eshcol of his church and people; for he is a cluster indeed of all divine perfections. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and the church is complete in him." (Col. ii. 9, 10.) Such is the glorious but mysterious connexion of our most glorious

Christ, in this double nature, God and man in one; that had we faith at all times in lively exercise, to live upon him, and live to him, we should forget every thing of our own poverty, wretchedness, and emptiness; and only consider those things as rendering us more suited "to receive out of his fulness and grace for grace."

The spouse in the Canticles, while singing to her love, expressed this in a very blessed manner: "My Beloved (said she) is unto me as a cluster of camphire, in the vineyards of Engedi." (Song i. 14.) This is not the camphire known by us in modern times; for this camphire is in cakes, and never in clusters. Indeed it could not be. For the camphire of the apothecary is formed from the gummy substance of the tree itself, and is never the fruit. And the words, divided as they ought, are *the man; Esh,* or *Ishi,* my man; *col,* the cluster, (meaning her beloved) is a cluster which comprehends all things; that is for life and salvation. Which is a beautiful and comprehensive expression in allusion to Christ, who is the All in all; yea, the whole of the church, for all her wants, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. So that in this love-song of the spouse, she is calling Christ her *Ishi;* as her Lord himself commanded her to call him, and know him by, in the day of the gospel: "And it shall be in that day saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi, (my man, my husband) and shalt call me no more Baali (my lord.) For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth." (See Hosea ii. 16, 17.) I beg the reader to look at this Scripture of the prophet Hosea; and let him look also at the margin of the bible in that place. Our translators judged very right when they added this margin. Indeed, the Lord no doubt over-ruled their minds to preserve the word. For spoken as it was, and is, by Christ himself, it serves to shew with

what tenderness he always beheld his church, when he commanded his spouse to drop the word *Baali,* my Lord; and to use the more endearing one *Ishi,* my man, or my husband. For though it be true, that both words may be translated *Husband,* and so *Baali* is in Isaiah liv. 5. "Thy Maker is thine husband;" yet there is implied an authority, a dominion, in the word *Baali;* signifying lordship; which is not so in *Ishi,* my man. We cannot with propriety say *Baali, my man.* But *Ishi* is expressly this; and answers to the tender and endearing appellation, *my man.* Hence what a lovely view this gives of our most lovely and all-loving Christ! And I venture to detain the reader with a question, when I add; Is it not from this very Scripture, and from this divine authority, that we find a very common expression made use of by faithful and affectionate wives, when speaking of their husbands; they call him *my man,* intimating thereby the more special, personal interest which they have in him, and by which they delight that every one should know him. And it is a term not only of right, but of peculiar affection, as if they were to say, He is mine, and not another's. So speaks Christ elsewhere himself (See Hosea iii. 3. Song iv. 12. Prov. v. 15.) Modern times and modern manners unhappily have learnt to drop such sweet and scriptural affinities. The awful history of the day in which we live too sadly proves it. But I can well remember in my boyish days, when the term was very general, among such as had respect to the honourable state of wedlock, when true affection gave birth to the union; and an eye to Christ's marriage with his church formed the cement in love. Affectionate wives delighted so to particularize in love the partner of their heart. And we see how the sponse did so by Christ, and Christ took pleasure in it. The spies who were true men when cutting down the cluster, no doubt, as well

as their faithful fathers before them, had an eye to Christ, in the promised Canaan; but the unbelievers saw nothing farther in the thing itself, but the "provision for the flesh to fulfil the lust thereof."

I only detain the reader with one observation more in relation to what the spouse saith of her Christ, as being "a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi." Various have been the opinions of the learned in biblical study, as to the word: Some have supposed it the *date tree*, from its wide spreading branches: others have translated it the *cypress vine;* from its being medicinal and healing. And some of the Hebrew writers have gone so far as to translate the words, *ishi col copher;* my man, that by his great cluster propitiates, or *the man of propitiation.* In either sense it serves to set forth our most glorious Christ. And the latter sense, if accepted, shews what the ancient Jews thought of Christ, that he would be the church's propitiation; though modern Jews do not allow that our most glorious Christ is the One, the very One, and the only One, whom Jehovah hath set forth in this divine character. (Rom. iii. 25. Acts iv. 12.)

But reader! while the *ancient* Jews gave testimony to the thing itself, and *modern* Jews rather relinquish it than allow our most glorious Christ to be the One; think, oh! think, what a blessedness is yours and mine, if so be, by divine teaching, we not only know and acknowledge the want of a propitiation, but have seen what John saw, and felt what he felt, when under the sense of sin he said: "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John ii. 1, 2.) Oh! how different from the false spies would be, and indeed is, the conduct of all the Lord's people, who in their report of the Lord's Canaan can, and do, certify to the Lord's faithfulness! Never

surely, shall I have fears or doubts of possessing the heavenly Canaan, while I behold Him with the eye of faith, who is entered as my Fore-runner there; and hath taken possession of it in my name. Oh! no! never, never shall I feel doubts, fears, misgivings, or heart-straightenings in prayer, so long as I can and do look up, and behold Jesus gone before, who is both the propitiation, and the propitiary; the sacrifice and the altar; yea, the whole of all my confidence, and all my joy! What shall damp my cause with my righteous God and Father, as long as I have this Almighty Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous; who is the propitiation for our sins? (John xvii. 25.)

The sad and sorrowful report, the unfaithful spies returned with, will meet us in due course of our subject. It will be sufficient for the present to observe, as the Scripture hath recorded, that "they returned from searching the land after forty days." Let me first only add a remark, which I think to be not a little interesting. It seems that the spies went through the greater part of the promised land. For from Zin to Rehob, and then from the south to Hebron, they must have compassed the greater part from south to north. And what I would chiefly notice is, that at Hebron they were near to the ashes of the great mother of Israel, Sarah, who first, by the Lord's appointment, took possession of Canaan. Here also were deposited the remains of Abraham and the patriarchs', resting in hope of the glorious morning of the resurrection in Christ. (See Genesis xxiii. xxv.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land.

"And they told him and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.

"Nevertheless, the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great; and moreover, we saw the children ofAnak there.

"And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

"But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.

"And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched, unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the men we saw in it are men of a great stature.

"And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." (Numb. xiii. 26—33.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

This part of the history opens with a sorrowful page.—Charity might have prompted us to hope, that as the Lord had graciously passed by their former distrust and disobedience, when commanding them to go up at once to the possession of the land, and they would not; (and now permitting them to send before, as if to shew them somewhat of the lovely country, and to bring to their recollection past mercies, as a confidence for future blessings;) they would have come back with holy delight. But in this evil report

we see how sin and unbelief, by accumulating, hardens. . Every man's heart by nature grows more callous, thereby, against the impression of divine mercies; until at length, like a thing baked in an oven, nothing can penetrate the obduracy. Lord! what is man, when left to himself!

Let the reader look at the report.—We behold expressed in it not only base distrust of God; the God which had so often revealed himself to them in a thousand ways of love; but daring falsehood added in their account. The Lord had assured the people by his servant Moses, that it was a good land, and which he had himself espied for them; yet they were bold enough to contradict God; and to say in their evil report, that it was not a good land; but a land "which ate up all the inhabitants thereof." And yet in the very moment that they said so, they brought down some of the delicious fruits of the country, which proved the falsehood: and while they dared to talk of the land impoverishing the people, as if they were famished, and like skeletons for want of food, they described the inhabitants as giants, so well fed and nourished, how that they themselves were as "grasshoppers in their sight."

But reader! while we peruse the history of these men, and stand amazed, (as we well may) at the perfidy of their conduct; let us for a little while leave the camp of Israel, and bring the subject nearer home. The Canaan, promised Israel, was but a type of that heavenly Canaan assured to us, which hath foundations, "whose builder and maker is God." The people were taught to look forward to the possession of this land, the glory of all lands, flowing with milk and honey, as a place of rest. And this also was typical of the *sabbatism*, or everlasting sabbath in heaven, "which remaineth for the people of God;" yea, God himself, in Christ, who is our rest, our home,

our habitation, our dwelling place. (Psalm. xc. 1.) They had the pillar of the cloud to guide them by day, and the pillar of fire to protect them by night; but we have the glorious substance itself, of which these were the symbols, to make certain the covenant promises. Jehovah, in his Trinity of persons, hath confirmed, and made out by patent, the everlasting possession in Christ; the father making himself over in that full promise, when he saith, "I will be their God;" and the Son having "given himself for his church," and to the church; and the Holy Ghost, being the "Spirit of promise." And hence in the gospel, it is called the "earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Eph. i. 13, 14.) And have we not, in the Scripture revelation made of our Canaan, had such discoveries of the everlasting reality of the things themselves? Have we not seen and tasted the Eschol, the promegranates and figs of the country? I mean, the fruits of the Spirit, as so many pledges and earnests of our one day possessing it. And yet how often do the Lord's people suffer the seeming difficulties which arise in their way to cause them to think unfavourably of that goodly land!

Ye ministers of my God; ye that are of the Calebs and Joshuas of the present day; see that ye call off the minds of the Lord's true Israel, from all creature confidences, and direct the people to Him, and Him only, who is the alone "hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof." It is from the leaders in the Lord's army, the people are to expect animation, under the Lord. And when they that minister in holy things, and go before them, *can* and *do* say: "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you,

that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us: That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John i. 2, 3.) Such things, coming from the mouth and heart of the Lord's ministers, under the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit, cannot fail to put an animation into the spirits of the Lord's people; and the fear of God arising in the soul will put out the fear of man, "which bringeth a snare." The stripling David felt this in a moment of trial, when the boasted threats of the Philistine frightened all Israel. He looked to the Lord; and in that look, he lost sight of the fear of man. "The Lord (said he) that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, will deliver me out of the hands of this Philistine." (1 Sam. xvii. 37.) Had the spies said the same, The Lord, that delivered us from Pharoah, and from Amalek, will be with us now; and considered less of the giant's strength, and more of the Lord God's all-sufficiency; never would they have returned under such apprehensions of fear.

It is truly blessed, when the mind is brought into a fixed, steady, abiding trust in God. The Lord's people are, in the very nature of their calling, suffered to be an exercised people; neither can they subsist a moment but as they live in and upon the Lord Jesus Christ. The stream doth not depend more upon the fountain, than the spiritual life of the child of God doth upon Christ.

We must not dismiss this part of our subject, until we have taken one view more of those spies, to remark the striking dissimilarity between the faithful and the unfaithful. Had we been present when the spies returned, and amidst the clamours of the majo-

rity beheld Caleb attempting to still the people with his advice; professing his confidence in the Lord, and the multitude with one voice opposing him and Joshua; should we not have felt the full force of the blessed words of the Holy Ghost, by Paul: "Who maketh thee to differ from another; and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) Oh! how the soul is melted when the Lord's distinguishing grace is thus made known and felt, and enjoyed. Was not Esau Jacob's brother, said the Lord? Yes; and how did the Lord mark the wonderful diversity! (Mal. i. 2.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried, and all the people wept that night.

"And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses, and against Aaron; and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt, or would God that we had died in this wilderness.

"And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

"And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

"Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel:

"And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes.

"And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying: The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.

"If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it to us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

"Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people

of the land; for they are bread for us; their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not.

"But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation, before all the children of Israel." (Numb. xiv. 1—10.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

As we advance in the history, we advance in beholding stronger features of delinquency. Like the chambers of imagery, into which the Lord the Holy Ghost led the prophet by the hand, as then, so now, every department only unfolds greater abominations than the former. (Ezek. viii. 6, &c.) Oh! were the Lord, the Almighty spiritual anatomist, to dissect to the view the bosom of the man who knoweth and feeleth most of the plague of his own heart; how astonished would he be, when discovered to him, to behold how far deeper and more abundant the workings of corruption are in those latent foldings in himself, than his imagination had before conceived. (Jer. xvii. 9.)

The relation, at this part of the history, opens with an account of the deep affliction of the whole congregation in receiving the report of the false spies. "They lifted up their voice and cried, and wept that night." But what sorrow was this? Not "the godly sorrow (the Holy Ghost speaks of by Paul) which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of." Not that they had so shamefully distrusted the Lord, and would not take his word, depending more upon an arm of flesh; but it was the "sorrow which worketh death." (2 Cor. vii. 10.) The disappointed views which they had formed of Canaan. They saw, as they thought, their hopes blighted; their expectations of worldly prosperity cut off, and all their carnal prospects of a land flowing with milk and honey now over. Yea, their sorrow

is marked with peculiar aggravation in one of the Psalms, where it is said: they despised the pleasant land; they believed not the Lord's word. (Psa. cvi. 24.)

I beg the reader to remark with me, the awful progress of sin. First, that it brake out in unavailing cries and tears, and continued the whole night. Next, in murmuring against God, wishing that they had died in Egypt, or in the wilderness. And then charging God foolishly; as if the Lord had brought them hither for destruction; and that they might fall by the sword; their wives and their children to be given for a prey into the hands of their enemies. Then again, in taking up such a preposterous idea as of going back to Egypt. "Let us make us a captain, (said they) and let us return into Egypt." To what a daring height of rebellion and hardness were they arrived! And according to the relation of this transaction in the wilderness, given by Nehemiah, they actually did make a captain, with that intention to return. (See Nehemiah ix. 17.) Was there ever a conduct so foolish as well as base! To what purport could they propose to return to Egypt? Were they in earnest to go back again into bondage? It was but little more than a year since they left Egypt. And had they forgotten the rigour of their services there? A little straw, could they have found it, when scattered over the land of Egypt, to seek it, would then have been thought a mercy; and since that time the Lord had fed them with bread from heaven, and brought water out of the rock for drink. Besides; to return to Egypt, what madness, not to say what impossibility! Did they suppose that in their daring attempt the Lord would lighten them back as he had lighted them forward; and open a passage again for them through the Red Sea; with their captain at their head, whom they had chosen, in open defiance of God?

But we read Israel's history to little profit, if we look not into it as into a mirror, to behold too near a resemblance to our own: even among those of whom we hope better things, and "things which accompany salvation." Alas! what unbelief may be, and often is, discoverable in our hearts. It is, comparatively speaking, very easy to trust God, when we are able to trace God; and while all things smile to favour our wishes, and nothing thwarts in the Lord's providences to counteract our desires; in those smooth seasons, and the sun-shine of life, as long as the Lord makes every thing minister to our pursuits, it is easy to talk of trusting God. But when matters are dark and discouraging; and the Lord appears to be coming forth as an enemy, and hedges our way with thorns, it must be a blessed frame of mind, and from having received large portions of faith and grace from the Lord, that we follow God in the dark, as well as in the light. The same child of God who in his prosperity said: "I shall never be moved; Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong;" in the same breath added, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." (Psalm xxx. 6, 7.) When the prophet Jonah was sent on a message from the Lord to Nineveh; and the men of that city humbled themselves before the Lord, at the preaching of Jonah; the prophet was hurt at the Lord's shewing mercy towards them, in that he had received command from the Lord, to tell the Ninevites, that in forty days, and the city should be overthown; and now the Lord suspended the judgment. And the prophet, in the anger of his mind, dared to expostulate with God on his forbearance, and said: "I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying when I was yet in my country? For I know that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil! Therefore, now O Lord, take I

beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than live!"

Is it possible that a prophet of the Lord should have thus acted? Did Jonah really desire rather that the Lord should destroy Nineveh, than that his threatenings should not be fulfilled? Did he dread being found a false prophet, more than being found an unsuccessful preacher? And is this the man that offered up so sweet and gracious a prayer but a little while before, when from the belly of hell, as he called it, he cried unto the Lord in his affliction; and the Lord, as he knew, heard his voice? (See Jonah ii. throughout.)

But here we see what man is; yea, what every man is in himself; and that it is grace *alone*, which makes all the difference between one and another. The Calebs and the Joshuas of the present day are faithful, when by communications from the Lord he makes them so. But without these unceasing succours, the best of men are but men; and have a large portion of corrupt nature as well as grace. And the workings of corruption are still in the old man, however mercifully the Lord restrains them from boiling over. And it is very blessed, when from being garrisoned, as the church in her worst circumstances always is by the Divine presence; the Lord pours in by a way unseen every suited supply of strength and grace to help in time of need. And when from these resources, the child of God is enabled to hold on and hold out, and to hang upon the promise of *the faithful God;* when to his own apprehension, he can for the moment discover no human way to the accomplishment; this is faith in her best armour; weapons not carnal, but spiritual, when "every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

What an interesting contemplation doth the subject furnish, in beholding amidst the murmuring of the

whole assembly, the falling of Moses and Aaron on their faces before the Lord; and Joshua and Caleb, rending their clothes, in token of their deep humiliation of this daring rebellion of the people against the Lord! The falling prostrate before God; rending of garments; smiting on the thigh; is a way of self-reproach; plucking off the hair; and lying down all night in sackcloth and ashes; these were among the tokens made use of by the people of God, in the early ages of the church, to shew their abhorrence of themselves, or of the people, when sin was found among them. And no doubt there were very sweet aboundings of grace on such occasions; distinguishing the *precious* from the *vile*. Never doth the child of God lie lower before the Lord than in such hallowed seasons. What a beautiful representation the Holy Ghost hath given us of this in the case of Ezra, the man of God, when he had discovered the defilements of Israel. "O my God, (said he) I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." (Ezra ix. throughout.) The reader cannot do better than to turn to Scripture. It is very blessed.

But to what desperate lengths was the whole congregation arrived, when to the gentle entreaties of Joshua and Caleb, who had been to see the land as well as they, and had seen the inhabitants also, they commanded the people "to stone them with stones!" How powerful and unanswerable were the arguments of persuasion, had the hearts of the congregation not been seared as with a hot iron; when not only the good land they urged to bring them from their desperate wickedness, but the Lord's sure presence being with his people; and that all their enemies' strength, and all their defence was gone from them; and their persons and their possessions became only bread for

the Lord's people! And what events would have followed it is impossible to say; had not the Lord himself interposed to stop their fury; and to shelter his chosen from their vengeance. The words are short, but solemn. "And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel!" The Lord is come himself to judge! Let us, as is most suitable, pause over the trembling subject.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me; and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?

"I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier, than they.

"And Moses said unto the Lord, Then the Egyptian shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;)

"And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land; for they have heard that thou, Lord, art among this people, that thou, Lord, art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them; and that thou goest before them by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

"Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard of the fame of thee will speak, saying,

"Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore hath he slain them in the wilderness.

"And now I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,

"The Lord is long suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation.

"Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

"And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word.

"But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (Numb. xiv. 11—21.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

Imagination fails to form any thing which can bear the smallest resemblance, so as to bring home to our thoughts the vast interest which the camp of Israel here set forth, between the solemn appearance of the Lord come to Judgment, and Moses, his servant standing forth to plead for Israel. Let the reader figure to himself what Holy Scripture hath furnished in several other parts of the history of the church in the wilderness, of the Lord's appearing among them, to impress the mind with the best apprehensions how awful it must have been. We read upon a former occasion that "the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire in the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel." (Exod. xxiv. 15—18. Deut. iv. 36. Heb. xii. 29.) What trembling paleness and horror to every guilty beholder! Yea, we read, upon one occasion, that Moses himself, so "terrible was the sight, said, I exceedingly fear and quake." (Exod. xix. 16. with Heb. xii. 2.)

But when the appearance of the Lord was followed with his Almighty voice, declaring judgment, how must all faces have gathered blackness! Let the reader not fail, while beholding Moses standing forth the advocate of Israel, to notice the arguments he used. *First:* The glory of God himself, whose faithfulness stood pledged in covenant engagements to Israel. If God did not bring his people into Canaan, where was his faithfulness? Jehovah had pledged himself in this divine perfection to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to be their God, and the God of their children to a thousand generations. How then

if God now destroyed them, how, would this be accomplished?

*Secondly:* Think what a reproach to God would they be, when the nations around should hear of it. They would ascribe the destruction of the people not to their sin: for being sinners themselves, they thought nothing of that: but to the want of ability in God. He was not able, they would say. And therefore what an awful thing would it be for the Egyptians and the inhabitants of the land to slander the Lord! This is the very argument which Joshua made use of afterward in the wars with Canaan: "O Lord God, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies, and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?"

*Thirdly:*—But observe how the Lord parried off this argument of Moses, and at the same time tried the faithfulness of his servant. If I destroy them I will still be faithful to Israel; for thou art of the same stock; and "I will make of thee a greater and a mightier nation than they."

*Fourthly:* As the Lord proved Abraham faithful, so the Lord proved Moses. This will not do, said the man of God. It is Israel I plead for; not for me to be great, but for the Lord to be gracious. And therefore now I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according to those glorious proclamations of mercy which thou hast before made of thy long-suffering, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. "And as thou hast forgiven thy people from Egypt, even until now."

*Fifthly:* And then follows the gracious answer. "The Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word. But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with my glory."

But let us drop Moses, the advocate, and look at the Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Intercessor whom

Moses represented; and in whose advocacy *alone* Moses found acceptance. Oh! what a subject opens here for the most animated attention in beholding our most glorious Christ thus set forth by shadow in those early ages of the church! (Rev. xiii. 8.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Because all those men which have seen my glory and my miracles, which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

"Surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

"But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

"I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die." (Numb. xiv. 22—25. 35.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I HAVE only to record the statement of Holy Scripture, in the solemn confirmation which followed of the Lord's faithfulness to his word. This chapter relates the immediate death of the false spies; verse 37. And the Holy Ghost is express to state in a subsequent chapter, the death of all that generation. Six hundred thousand men, who came out of Egypt, paid the forfeiture of their lives for their rebellion; and never lived to enter Canaan. But their little ones, whom they had dared to charge God with destroying for a prey, to them the promised land was given for their possession. Let the reader consult Num. xxvi.; and he will behold the account of this awful judgment. Never, throughout all the annals of the world, can there be found a parallel history.

# AARON

## *PUTTING ON INCENSE,*

AND

## MAKING ATONEMENT FOR THE PEOPLE.

### HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan, and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men;

"And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown.

"And they gathered themselves together against Moses, and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them; wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?

"And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face." (Numbers xvi. 1—4.)

### NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It would lead into a subject too extensive to gather into one view, the whole of this eventful history, (interesting as it is in every portion of it,) connected with this representation of our most glorious Christ, in his person and offering, here shadowed forth, by the priestly office of "Aaron putting on incense, and making atonement for the people:" but as introductory

to the soul-refreshing doctrine which it contains; it will be proper, and indeed in some measure necessary, in order to illustrate by it the blessed truth of salvation itself, to take a short statement of the situation of the people of Israel, at the time when this service took place in the wilderness.

A very little interval had passed from the awful death of the unfaithful spies, for their false report in their return from searching the Promised Land; and the trembling sentence of the Lord still hanging over the heads of all that generation who joined in their mutiny; when a renewed murmuring broke out among the people against Moses and Aaron. The Scripture at the head of this page, relates the names and rank of the persons with whom this rebellion commenced; and the first impression which the knowledge of it made on the mind of Moses;—"He fell on his face!" So should every child of God, and every faithful servant of God do, under the unjust reproaches of ungodly men. Yea, where shall the Lord's people seek refuge, but from the Lord; and in the Lord himself, under all the accusations of Satan; and all that passeth in this sinful, sorrowful, dying world; while "without are fightings, and within are fears?" Oh! it is a most blessed way, when we *can* and *do* cease from man, and look to the Lord! There is not a single trial of life, in the persecutions of the ungodly, and the malice of the world, but what is then sanctified, when Jesus takes his exercised ones to his bosom; and saith, "Peace! be still, and know that I am God."

Never surely, was there less cause given for a charge so unkind and unjust, as the ground upon which those men came forward against the servants of the Lord. Every part of Israel's history, from the very first of their being formed into a nation in Egypt, to the moment of this insurrection, manifested

with what reluctancy Moses had entered upon the arduous service, and followed it up, to which the Lord by express command had called him. And more than once had he expostulated with the Lord upon the occasion, praying to be dismissed from it, even if it were by death itself, rather than continue in a ministry so laborious, and requited by the people with such cruelty. (Exod. xxxii. 32. and Numb. xi. 11, 15.) And in respect to Aaron, the charge was equally false: "What is Aaron, (said Moses) that ye murmur against him? Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord!" (Exod. vi. 7, 9.)

And observe the unparalleled effrontery of those factious spirits, in arrogating to themselves a sanctity of character at the time they were shewing their contumacy of God, in the accusation of his servants. "Ye take too much upon you, (said they) seeing the congregation is holy, every one of them." Of all the awful effects of our utterly lost, ruined, and undone estate, by the fall, this perhaps is the highest. A thing impossible, but from a delusion of Satan himself. That in the midst of a nature inherently all sin and corruption; hopeless, helpless in itself; and as impossible to do one act of good by any efforts of our own, as the "Æthiopian to change his skin, or the leopard his spots;" yet through the deceitfulness of sin, and our own desperately wicked hearts, like those spoken of by our Lord, in the professing church of Laodicea, we fancy ourselves to be "rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Rev. iii. 17.)

And what rendered the condition of those men yet more tremendously alarming, was, that in the presumptuous reasonings of their own minds, while they contended for the holiness of the congregation, every one of them; they did to all intents and pur-

poses deny the necessity of a mediator. They virtually set aside the person and salvation of Christ, and dared to stand upon their own bottom, in all their appearances and offerings before God.

Imagination sickens at the prospect! And the dreadful destruction which followed, (as the succeeding part of the chapter relates,) serves to shew, how beyond all conception hardened to all the possibilities of obduracy, must that man be in sin, who ventures before the Lord in a righteousness of his own; and thus "runneth upon the thick bosses of the buckler of the Almighty." (Job xv. 25, 26.) Surely, of all the buddings, blossomings, and fruits of man's fallen nature, this pharasaical righteousness is the most offensive before God. Yea, the Lord himself speaks of it by his servant the prophet, with more than ordinary reprehension; "A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face. Which say, Stand by thyself; come not near to me, for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." (Isa. lxv. 3—5.) A striking similitude taken from among men, to shew the Lord's utter detestation of it. For as smoke received into the nostrils, and coming up before the eyes of a man, is that kind of vapour arising from such unkindled embers, is of all things most offensive to those delicate organs of ours; so to him, who is of "purer eyes than to behold iniquity," the self-confidence of sinners is of all things most abominable in the sight of the Lord.

And, indeed, this pharasaical righteousness which hath appeared in all ages to the sad discomfiture of the church, as well as against the Lord himself, wherever it is found, manifests high treason to the majesty of God. For it challengeth God, as if the doctrine of man's fallen state was not correct; and even contends with God on the score of merit. Yea, the

man that boasts of his own holiness becomes a compeer with God; and calls in question the wisdom of God, in the plan of salvation by Christ. Indeed it sets it aside, and makes nought of it. For if man hath a righteousness of his own, the redemption by Christ is rendered nugatory; and "Christ is dead in vain." Gracious Lord! keep my soul from such presumptuous sins, that they may never have dominion over me; but let me lie low in the dust before God, conscious of my nothingness, and unworthiness, and vanity.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And he spake unto Korah, and unto all his company, saying, Even to-morrow the Lord will shew who are his, and who is holy, and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen, will he cause to come near unto him.

"This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company;

"And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord to-morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi. (Numb. xvi. 5—7.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

Who but must admire the firmness of mind which the man of God here manifested in such a perilous season! And who but must yet still more admire, adore, and bless God, the Almighty Author of that gracious gift to his servant! What confidence had grace induced in the breast of Moses, in bringing the matter to an immediate decision, and making an appeal to the Lord himself, to judge between the parties. As if he had said; let God be the arbiter, and let the morrow determine. How could Moses be ture that the Lord would determine so early as the

morrow? Had the Lord indeed secretly whispered in Moses's ear, as the Lord did to Samuel in an after-age of the church in a way of direction? (1 Sam. ix. 15.) Surely, nothing less than a secret impulse from the Lord could have induced such an holy confidence in the Lord; and have emboldened Moses, not only to refer the matter to the Lord, but to limit the very time when the Lord would appear for his servants: "Even to-morrow (said the man of God) the Lord will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him."

And I particularly request the reader to observe with me, the method proposed by Moses for the Lord's decision. Those men had not only arraigned Moses's government, in bringing them into the wilderness to kill them; but by asserting that the people were holy, every one had dared to invade the priestly office of Aaron. Hence Moses, by desiring those "two hundred and fifty princes" to come before the Lord with their censers and incense, and fire of their own righteousness, would prove if the Lord had accepted their persons, their holiness at once; and thereby shew that they needed neither Aaron's ministration, as a type of Christ; neither the person and righteousness of Christ himself.

I tremble while I write! Though the period in which these transactions took place are so remote from the present hour; yet to commit to paper the record of so horrible a conduct, who but must tremble for the eventual consequences! And in the alarming prospect of what that morrow, to which Moses was then looking, would bring forth, shrink appalled and confounded in the tremendous judgment impending!

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

¶ "And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up.

"Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?

"Moreover, thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up.

"And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the Lord, Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them." (Numb. xvi. 12—15.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

So many beauties of instruction are included within these few verses, that notwithstanding the infinitely important truths contained in them, I must not allow myself to enlarge, as otherwise I should delight to do. I can only therefore glance at one or two of the more leading points; hoping the Lord himself will fully open to the heart of the regenerated reader. And first: Let it be observed, the desperately wicked state to which those men were arrived through the deceitfulness of sin, in refusing all accommodation with the Lord's servants, in the way proposed by Moses. Given up "to strong delusions to believe a lie," (as the Holy Ghost, upon another occasion, expresseth it, 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.) they charged Moses with the crime of leading Israel to their ruin, and said that so glaring and barefaced was this intention, as could not but be seen, unless he put out the eyes of the people. Secondly: The charge was extended farther; in that they asserted, the whole administration of Moses had been but to deceive. They speak of Egypt, which they had

found a land of bondage, and under which they had groaned, as if it had been a "land flowing with milk and honey;" and the wilderness, where the Lord had miraculously fed them with *manna* from heaven; but as an intended slaughter-house, and to be their graves. Is it not astonishing that sin should so far blind men's eyes as to make them speak the very reverse of what they know to be the truth? But we read these and the like Scriptures to little profit, if under divine teaching we do not behold in them the portrait of every man by nature. It is grace, rich, free, full, sovereign grace *alone*, which makes all the difference between man and man. There is but one and the same common stamina of fallen Adam's race in all. And if corruption, which is always working within, doth not bubble up, and run over, like the scum of a pot, alike in all; this ariseth not from any better principle in our vile bodies than in others, but from the preventing and restraining grace of God. Oh! the unspeakable preciousness of that blessed Scripture; and the yet more precious God in Christ, who is the Almighty Author and Giver of it; "I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them to do them good: but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (Jer. xxxii. 40.)

I must detain the reader to remark the truth of this in what follows concerning Moses: "And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the Lord, Respect not thou their offering." Is this the same man which a little before, when this rebellion first broke out, "fell upon his face before the Lord?" Is this he, who in such confidence had referred to the Lord's decision? Could he not wait the morrow? Yea, is this Moses, who all along hitherto had interceded with the Lord for Israel, even when Israel had dealt unkindly with Moses? And doth he now pray against Israel, who

before had always prayed for them? It was said of him in a preceding chapter, with special mark and designation of character; "Now the man Moses was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth!" (Numb. xii. 3.) And hath he now lost his temper? Alas! what is man; yea, the meekest of men by nature, if the Lord but for a moment suspends the operations of his grace! Some may be constitutionally mild more than others. And some may learn to smoother their passion by education; but such restraints have nothing to be depended upon. Oh! how sweetly, blessedly, and powerfully do such views of the best of men, hold forth the necessity of having all our springs in our most glorious Christ. Truly, Lord! would I desire to learn of thee, and to have all from thee; for thou alone, art "meek and lowly in heart;" and by whom alone, and in whom alone, can I find rest unto my soul. (Matt. xi. 29.)

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## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the Lord, thou, and they, and Aaron, to-morrow;

"And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the Lord every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also and Aaron each of you his censer.

"And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron.

"And Korah gathered all the congregation against them, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation." (Numb. xvi. 16, 17, 18, 19.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It is impossible to enter upon this part of the history, but with the most awakened apprehensions of horror! It is marvellous, considering the desperate state of Korah, and his company, how they could have slept over the night; and yet in the morning come forward with such an uncovered front, to brave God to his face! If the man after God's own heart, "trembled for fear of God's judgments," as he tells us himself he did; though in the moment he thus expressed himself, we know that he was looking by faith to Christ, "in an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure; what apprehension ought to have been in the minds of those men, who not only came before God, without an eye to Christ, but daringly brought for an offering the *censers* and the *incense;* and the *fire* of their own righteousness. And when the glory of the Lord appeared, and the Lord himself as Moses had foretold, was come to judgment; were there no change upon their countenances, no apprehensions, no dread? No! We do not read of the least remorse! Infinitely gracious Lord God! Let the awful contemplation be accompanied with the blessed impressions of this grace upon my soul. Shortly, the same Almighty God, who then came to judge "between the precious and the vile," will finally come to "root out of his kingdom all things that offend;" and while he will then "come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe: he will be revealed with his mighty angels in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of Christ." (2 Thess. i. 7, 8.) In that all-decisive hour, Lord Jesus, let me be found then, as now, under the *censer* and *incense* of thy person, blood, and righteousness. Let me

look at no procuring cause, no merits, no holiness, no repentance, no, nor faith itself, as any duty of mine, and as partly recommending; but solely being found in Christ, and one with Christ; holy in his holiness, righteous in his righteousness, and "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation."

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, and unto Aaron, saying,

"Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.

"And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?" (Numb. xvi. 20, 21, 22.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

What an awful contrast this picture in the wilderness holds forth between the ungodly and the gracious! Methinks, I behold Korah and his numerous company, advancing without trembling steps, unawed and undismayed, and braving Omnipotence to do his worst; while like the burning mountains, every malignant passion boiling with them, ripening them for eternal judgment. On the other hand, I see Moses and Aaron, standing with the few elders of Israel, conscious of the justice of their cause, and waiting the decision from the Lord. And what a scene instantly followed: when the voice of the Lord was heard, saying, "Separate yourselves from this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment!"

But from the camp of Israel, let the reader's imagination take wing, and light down at the foot of the cross of our most glorious Christ. Precious Lord Jesus! how do all subjects, and all characters

among men, sink to nothing in the contemplation of thy grace and mercy, when by taking that holy portion of our nature into union with thy GODHEAD, thou mightest "put away sin by the sacrifice of thyself." (Heb. ix. 26.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

"Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

"And Moses rose up, and went unto Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him.

"And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.

"So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children.

"And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of my own mind.

"If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the Lord hath not sent me:

"But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord.

"And it came to pass, as he made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them.

"And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.

"They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

"And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.

"And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense." (Numb. xvi. 23—35.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I HAVE largely trespassed in the observations I have already made: for the reader will recollect, that hitherto what hath been brought before him, is but introductory to the great doctrine of Aaron's priesthood; which was the principal subject intended in this Scripture Extract. I must therefore leave him to make his own comments, under the Lord's teaching in the views of the trembling judgment the Holy Ghost hath here recorded, and brought before him, of the awful death of those men.

And if I detain him one moment longer over the view of this part of the history, it shall only be to observe to him, and to request his most earnest observation on the occasion also; namely, that the Lord not only appeared for his faithful servants in such a critical season of danger: but also inspired the mind of Moses with such holy confidence as to call upon the Lord to do that in a way of judgment upon those sinners which had never been done or even thought of by the world before? and by this new and hitherto unheard of death, for ever silenced, as might have been thought, the daring rebellion of ungodly men. We have several remarkable instances in the Holy Scriptures to this amount, wherein the Lord appears to have signed blanks, with special grace, for the special occasions of his chosen ones to fill in, as their necessities should require; so as to manifest himself to them in a way different from his ordinary manifestations in the world. Abraham stands high on record on this account, in the offering of his own son Isaac. (Gen. xxii. 17.) Joshua also, commanding the sun to stand still by the space of a day in

Gibeon. And the comment of the Holy Ghost, on his own Scripture in this instance, shews how very highly the Lord in his Trinity of persons, appreciates his servants, as they are chosen in Christ. For it is said, "that there was no day like that before it, or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of man, for the Lord fought for Israel." (Joshua x. 12—14.) Elijah found equal confidence on a memorable occasion, when commanding the sacrifice to be drenched with water, which the prophet had before stipulated with the king of Israel, and with the people; the Lord should answer by fire. (1 Kings xvi. 21—39.) And this of Moses, calling for an earthquake on the very spot, and that spot only, where the rebels stood, to swallow them alive, while all the earth around felt no chasm. But marvellous as these things are to men who have no faith, neither knowledge of the Lord; they ought to be as so many standards of character, for every redeemed and regenerated child of God to act by, in all their communion with the Lord. What a beautiful Scripture that is in point, which the Holy Ghost hath given to the church by the prophet: "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: Ask me of things to come; concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands; command ye me." (Isa. xlv. 11.) As if the Lord threw the reins of government into the hands of his people: and as all real, spiritual prayer must, and doth, come from God, before it ascends to God; whatever is asked in faith, is answered in mercy. Little as it may be considered by the Lord's own people themselves, there is not a single petition which is framed in the heart of a regenerated child of God, but what hath the clear marks upon it, that God the Holy Ghost indites it; (Rom. viii. 26, 27.) that it is in perfect conformity to the will of God our Father; (1 Cor. ii. 10.) and wholly agreeable to the

mind and intercession of Christ. (1 Cor. ii. 16.) Oh! what a volume of proofs have we of this in the glorious gospel of the ever blessed God. (See John xiv. 13. John xv. 7. Matt. xv. 22, 28.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"But on the morrow all the congregatiou of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord.

"And it came to pass when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation; and, behold, a cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared.

"And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation." (Numb. xvi. 41—43.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

One might have thought that so awful a judgment as the late Scripture brought forth before us, must have been final and decisive; and for ever have silenced murmuring in the camp of Israel. Indeed, it is hardly possible to have supposed, had not the testimony of the divine word confirmed it, that a single Israelite could have remained hardened, while beholding the earth swallowing up the one whole party of those rebellious sinners; and the fire consuming the other in utter destruction from among the congregation. But such conclusions are formed from a total unacquaintedness with the desperately wicked state of the human heart by the fall. Nothing short of sovereign grace can make a change. Had it been possible for the earth to have vomited up again Korah and his company; and the men consumed by fire to have returned to the camp, perfectly restored in body, not an atom of change would the deliverance have

wrought on their minds. Yea, awful as it is to relate, yet the Scriptures have so solemnly pronounced the affecting truth that it cannot be doubted, if the lost in hell could be liberated, whether fallen angels or men, however altered their state, their nature would remain the same. The word of God thus describes the horrors both of their state and of their mind; "And they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds!" (Rev. xvi. 10.)

Hence we behold similar obduracy in the camp of Israel. While the earth had but just closed upon them, and the fire of God was still, in their apprehension, burning before them; and the shrieks of them gone down into the pit still sounding in their ears, the dreadful rebellion of the survivors had not abated in the smallest degree. For on the morrow, even the very day following those tremendous judgments, they dared to come forward again to fight against God; and boldly charged that on Moses and Aaron which carried so palpable a proof that it was wholly of God. "Ye have killed (said they) the people of the Lord." I dare not advance one step farther until that I have first put a note and an emphasis for unceasing observations on this most solemn doctrine of Holy Scripture. I would charge it on the reader's mind, as I desire to feel the full influence of it on my own, never to lose sight of a truth so infinitely momentous; for it is grace, rich, free, full, sovereign, unmerited grace, which makes all the difference between one man and another. If there be a revelation more loudly proclaimed to the church of God, one than another, it is respecting the sovereignty of divine grace. For the Lord's declared purpose for which he went forth in acts of communion, the Lord hath himself summed up in these sacred words;

"That in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 7.) To ascribe therefore to any other cause the salvation of men, is a direct defiance to the truth of God; and an attempt to frustrate God's great design which he hath here proclaimed. There may be, and there will be, from the weakness and infirmities of our fallen nature, various opinions on the minor points of the gospel; but the Holy Scriptures admit of none on the subject of grace. The Magna Charta of the gospel runs in these words; "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. ii. 8, 9.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

"Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment: And they fell upon their faces.

"And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun.

"And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congragation; and behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

"And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed." (Numb. xvi. 44—48.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

We are now arrived at that most interesting part of our subject, to which the original design of the present contemplation was intended; namely, to

behold Aaron putting on incense; and making atonement for the people." I beg the reader to pause at the threshhold, and ponder well every step he takes, as he enters into the sacred inclosure of a subject so infinitely sublime and important. And the Lord, the Spirit, give both to writer and reader, his divine unction, that we may have, each for himself, clear and spiritual apprehensions, to understand, on true scriptural principles, the great design of God in the solemn transactions here recorded.

And *first:* Let the reader not fail to observe, that here, as in the former instance, the Lord doth not leave the decision to man, but is come himself; only with this tremendous difference; the Almighty Judge waits not, as he did before, for the intercession of Moses, during which the execution of judgment was suspended; but now commands the faithful ones among the congregation to separate themselves from the guilty, and instantly proceeds to pour out his indignation. For thus the solemn Scripture relates: "And it came to pass when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation; and behold the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying; Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell on their faces." But they offered not a word. They dared not. The man of God saw that "wrath was gone out from the Lord: the plague was begun." Oh! what an exact, but awful representation was here given of that great day of God, when justice, strict, unalterable, irreversible justice, must form the standard of divine decision; when the "Lord shall judge the world in righteousness, and minister judgment to the people in righteousness." (Psalm ix. 8.)

I again and again beseech the reader to pause over the solemn view of this most awful of all subjects. And let him ponder it as a thing not remote, and as if merely set forth in the camp of Israel, but as one in which every son and daughter of Adam is alike interested; and in the ultimate event of which, the everlasting state of all mankind must depend. For as all the Adam race are sprung from one and the same common stock, and all equally involved in one and the same condemnation; of whom the Scripture declares "there is none that doeth good; no, not one;" it must undeniably follow, that every individual that stands on his own bottom, and without an eye to Christ, as these sinners in the wilderness did, can plead nothing but on the ground of equity. As the Lord said to Cain, so in effect is said to every one that rejects, as he did, the counsel of God against his own soul: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest evil, sin lieth at the door." (Gen. iv. 7.) Here then rests the final issue. The man that upon strict truth, can plead *Not guilty*, to a single breach of God's holy law, in thought, word, or deed; (if there be such an one upon the earth, which the word of the Lord most flatly denies,) such need not fear the Judge, for he can need no mercy; but if in that tremendous hour, when the Lord is come to judgment, sin first stares him in the face, who all along through life despised salvation by Christ; with his own alarmed conscience accusing him; the law of God arraigning him; and justice ready to fall upon him; who or what shall then deliver him from the wrath to come? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. iv. 18.)

Nay, even in every instance of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ, it is a salvation which worketh by righteousness. For the law of God admits of nothing

in a way of pardon, but upon the footing of a complete satisfaction. Righteousness, every son and daughter of Adam must have in himself, or his Surety, to appear in before God. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." This stands in the very portal of the gospel. And as none in himself hath any righteousness of his own; what an unspeakable blessedness is it, when we are brought to behold this righteousness in our most glorious Christ! Most sweetly do all those precious Scriptures sound in the ear of a poor self-condemned sinner, whom grace hath saved through faith:—"Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him, shall be ashamed—In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." (Isa. xlv. 24, 25.) "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (Cor. v. 21.) "And this is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." (Jer. xxiii. 6.)

*Secondly*:—Let us pass on to the view of the subject under another representation of it, in beholding Aaron in his priestly office, "putting on incense, and making atonement for the people."

In order that we may enter into a full apprehension of what God the Holy Ghost graciously taught the church, by this divine ordination of Aaron to this service, we must previously attend to what the Scriptures of God have uniformly taught the church of the incense itself; and of the priest's offering it in the golden censer before the Lord. We have a circumstantial account of the sacred prescription for making the incense: (Exod. xxx. 23, &c.) to which, for brevity sake, I refer. And the reader will observe, that the composition was formed of the richest spices of "myrrh and cinnamon, and cassia, with oil of the

holy ointment." All which were shadowy representations of the Holy Ghost, and his graces, with which the glorious Head of his church, Christ Jesus; and in Him all the members of his mystical body were anointed. (Psalm xlv. 7, 8. Psalm cxxxiii. 2, 3.) And hence to this divine unction all those very precious Scriptures, which are scattered more or less over the Bible, have respect. (Song i. 3. Song iv. 11. to the end. Song v. 1—5. Ezek. xx. 41, 42. Eph. v. 2.)

When the reader, under divine teaching, hath been enabled to enter into a scriptural and spiritual apprehension of the nature and design of incense; if he will attend to the leading ordinances under the Old Testament dispensation, he will, from the same divine teaching, discover that every presentation or offering made before the Lord, by incense, pointed to the merits and blood-shedding and righteousness of Christ. He indeed was, and is, the one, and the only one great object designed by the whole. All preached our most glorious Christ, in his finished salvation: and his was, and is, the sole substance signified; to whom under the law all the incense was but the shadow. One Scripture in proof, by way of illustration, will be sufficient, and serve as a specimen to shew what God the Holy Ghost intended under all. And we cannot refer to a more signal and illustrious testimony than the Lord hath set forth on the great day of atonement; when Aaron the High Priest, was commanded to go in before the mercy-seat, with this offering of incense: For thus we read: "And he (that is Aaron,) shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense, beaten small, and bring it within the vail. And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat, that

is upon the testimony, that he die not." (Lev. xvi. 12, 13.)

Every minute circumstance in this solemn offering pointed to the person and incense of our most glorious Christ. "The censer was of gold." (Heb. ix. 4.) And this set forth the GODHEAD of our Lord Jesus, who is fitly represented to the richest ore, because of the Almightiness of his person, and the durableness and everlasting nature of his kingdom: "whose throne is for ever and ever; and of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end." And the "burning coals of fire taken from off the altar," implied the sufferings of Christ, in his human nature, which in Scripture, are not unfrequently represented as fire; the wrath of God, burning as fire against sin, Christ sustained when he "made his soul an offering for sin." The altar *taken from,* and again *presented on,* very strikingly shadowed the *divine nature* of Christ; because it is the altar which sanctifieth the gift; and here, Christ was at once the Altar, the Sacrificer, and the Sacrifice. And the *sweet incense,* with which both the hands of Aaron were full, "beaten up small, to come up in a cloud within the vail upon the mercy-seat," very blessedly set forth that all the persons and offerings of the Lord's people, how small soever, were included in the hands of our Almighty Aaron, and were thus presented in the merits of his incense before God. And that the church in all the after ages might not err in forming true scriptural and spiritual apprehensions of those Old Testament ordinances, *shadowing out,* and referring *wholly to* New Testament mercies; the Lord was pleased by the ministry of his servant John, thus to explain the whole in the book of the Revelations. "And I saw (said John) another angel come and stand at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he

should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." (Rev. viii. 3, 4.) Oh! what unspeakable blessings doth the church of our most glorious Christ continually receive from the divine unction and teaching of God the Holy Ghost! Truly did our divine Lord speak, concerniug the Holy Ghost, when he said, "He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." (John xvi. 14.) And I cannot help breaking off in the midst of the observation, to bless that Almighty God, the Spirit, for his thus everlastingly glorifying the person, and shewing the infinite fulness and suitableness of the finished salvation of our most glorious Christ, daily to his people; "Thanks be unto God, for his unspeakable gift!"

But *thirdly:* for we must not stop here: As the incense represented the completeness of Christ's salvation, so Aaron represented the person of our glorious Lord, in his high priestly character. This is the most interesting part of our whole subject, and demands to be most particularly regarded. Christ is blessed in his work; blessed in his salvation; blessed in all his gifts and graces, which he hath bestowed, and will never cease to bestow upon his people; but he is infinitely more blessed in his own Almighty person. The church, with all she hath, and all she ever will have, she hath in Christ; for both her being, and her well-being, are all in him and from him, and by him. But there is somewhat infinitely more delightful, and for which she loves him; namely, for what he is in himself; for it is this which gives all the preciousness and blessedness of our relationship to him. Hence the very life of the church, both spiritually and eternally, is rendered secure, and

unchangeably so from him, and his unchangeable nature. He saith himself, "Because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.) Our union with Christ, therefore, is far greater than even our communion with Christ; because union is the source of communion; and is, therefore, by so much greater, as the *cause* of a thing is greater than the *effect*. But Christ himself is infinitely greater than both. So that when we behold him as Aaron, his type, here representing him, "putting on incense, and making atonement for his people;" substituting himself, that mighty Him, in our place and stead: this exalts our most glorious Christ to the highest and most sublime point of contemplation; and we behold in him the whole sum and substance of salvation.

*Fourthly*:—The ministry of Aaron is the next subject of improvement we have to gather from this mingled scene of mercy and judgment in the wilderness; in the contemplation of which we may humbly take up the language of the Psalmist, and say as he did, "I will sing of mercy and of judgment; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing." (Psalm ci. 1.) Nothing, surely, can more loudly proclaim that salvation is of grace than what is read to us, when we look at Aaron in this his ministry, "putting on incense, and making atonement for the people." For who was Aaron, considered in himself? A sinner; needing the very salvation as much as others, which was here shadowed forth in this offering before God. He was one of the fallen, helpless race of Adam, of whom the Holy Ghost testifieth: "There is none that doeth good; no, not one." (Rom. iii. 10.) And in proof of it we read but a little before, in Israel's history, that Aaron himself, by his rebellion, called forth the displeasure of the Lord. (See chap. xii. throughout.) Hence, we must look beyond Aaron to see the sole cause, both of his own acceptation, and the others,

which were saved from destruction with him, and this tremendous hour of the Lord's visiting the sins of his people. He and they had an eye to Christ. The "golden censer," on which the incense was offered, represented Christ. The "burning coals of fire," upon which the incense was put, were taken "from off the altar" before the Lord; these also represented Christ. The incense no less referred wholly to Christ, which in a cloud ascended before the mercy-seat. (See Judges xiii. 19, 20.) And both Aaron and the people, by faith, came under the censer of this offering for safety, when the High Priest stood between "the dead and the living, until the plague was stayed." Had it been otherwise; had Aaron taken a censer of his own, as Korah and his company did, (ver. 18.) or as Aaron's two sons did; (See Levit. x) had it been strange fire of their own, and not fire taken from off the altar; never would the cloud of the incense have come up, and covered the mercy-seat: (see Levit. xvi. 13.) but like those which were devoured by a fire from the Lord, such must have followed in destruction. Hence, we very blessedly learn that the acceptation, both of the persons and the offerings of the Lord's people, are solely in the Lord. I speak with reverence when I say, God cannot, consistently with the whole tenour of his sacred word, accept any but in Christ. He, and he alone, is the sole cause of acceptance. For it is said to be "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Eph. i. 6.) And I know not a single consideration so truly blessed and so truly encouraging and consolatory to every poor, feeble, but faithful servant of the Lord, who ministers as Aaron did in holy things, by the Lord's ordination, and in the Lord's word; amidst all the weaknesses and unworthinesses; and all his own infirmities, and all the infirmities of the people; that

the whole of his labours, as well as the persons and offerings of the minister and people, being offered solely with an eye to Christ, wretched as they are in themselves; yet being perfumed with him, and the incense of his merits, blood-shedding, and finished salvation, come up with acceptance on that Altar which sanctifieth the gift, even Christ Jesus. Sweetly the Holy Ghost puts his almighty seal to this soul-refreshing truth, when drawing the line of everlasting distinction between the Lord and his servants, he saith, "For the law maketh men high priests, which have infirmity." Here is the account of the servants, and the highest of servants; they all, like Aaron, are men of infirmity; of like passions with ourselves, and therefore have nothing for acceptance in themselves. Now comes the account of the Almighty Master: "But the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, (that is, as great High Priest,) who is consecrated for evermore; and through whom alone we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (Heb. vii. 28. Eph. ii. 18.)

We cannot, indeed we dare not, take leave of this most solemn scene in the camp of Israel, until that we have again considered the gracious design of God the Holy Ghost in causing it to be recorded, and preserving the history of it to the church, through all the intermediate ages, down to the present hour; and now, by the sweet unction of his divine teaching, giving us to see the whole realized in the glorious person and finished salvation of our most glorious Christ. It must have been a delightful view, in such a day of divine visitation as we have been contemplating, to have seen the high priest of Israel, as the type of our almighty Aaron, "putting on incense, and making atonement for the people." We may, through grace, figure to ourselves the man of God, thus fearlessly standing up amidst the "dying and the dead,"

braving all the horrors of the pestilence; while, from the golden censer in his hands, taken from the altar of God, the incense ascended in a cloud before the mercy-seat. But when, from the wilderness days of the church, during the ministry of Moses and Aaron, we turn to the present day of the church, still in a wilderness world, and behold the same continually going on in life, by plague and pestilence, from divine visitations, by reason of the continual provocations to the Lord; how unceasingly interesting the subject becomes! More than three thousand years have run out their course since this event took place in the camp of Israel. And nearly six thousand years have been numbered since "sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, because all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.) But what a relief to the redeemed and regenerated child of God, when, from the camp of Israel, and from the present wilderness state through which the church is travelling, we behold the Lord Jesus Christ standing up the glorious, gracious High Priest of his people; having made atonement for his people. He hath truly run into the midst of the congregation and put on incense; not, indeed, taken from the altar of the worldly sanctuary, and the services, which were all a "shadow of good things to come; but of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." His incense was, and is, the offering of his own most glorious person; and both the *censer* and the *fire* from off the altar, the precious oblation of his own most precious blood. He stood as the typical Aaron did; yea, and he stands now, between "the living and the dead;" between those who, led by grace, come under the shelter of his divine person, blood and righteousness, and live in him and to him; and the dead, who reject the counsel of God against their own souls, and refuse both him that speaks on

earth, and speaks from heaven. And it is wholly by virtue of his Almighty person and merits the plague is stayed among his people. For as the Holy Ghost very blessedly hath taught the church, so the church receives the gracious truth, and finds the blessed efficacy of it in the heart and conscience: "but Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a great and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands: that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats, and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb. ix. 11, 12.)

I detain the reader only to add a short observation from the whole; and which, if so be the Lord hath made him a gracious reader, that with a spiritual apprehension he can, and doth enter into a true scriptural understanding of those great things of God, he will not be displeased with. I would beg him to connect into one point of view the several interesting scenes of this whole chapter. Let him stand with me as upon an eminence, where he overlooks the Korahs, and the Dathans, and the Abirams, the enemies of the church of God in those days; and behold the little handful of the Lord's chosen ones, Moses and Aaron, with the few elders of Israel, which among the lost were found faithful, to whom the whole congregation were opposed; and let him contemplate the prospects and the issue of that memorable day, and then say, how eternally safe and secure the Lord's people are amidst an host of foes combined against them. Oh! how sweet the Scriptures of God are heard by the ear of faith, when the Lord is coming forth for his people's deliverance. "For the oppressor of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord." (Ps. xii. 5.)

And when from the camp of Israel, as it was *then*,

if the spiritual and enlightened eye turns to the contemplation of the church of our most glorious Christ, as it is *now*, amidst all that seeming violence and opposition which men and devils make "against the Lord and against his Christ;" the divine fortress is not only impregnable, but in the assaults made against it they are literally accomplishing the very reverse of what they design. The church is garrisoned by the divine presence. And He that keeps it night and day, that none shall hurt it, not only pours in resources to hold out every siege of the enemy, but waters it every moment. And to the eye of faith may be seen what John beheld in vision,—"the Son of God, who is passed into heaven as your great High Priest, with his golden censer; and with whose incense he offers up the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne." (Rev. viii. 3, 4.) Precious Lord Jesus! Under thy censer be it my constant happiness to be found, both in my person and offerings. In the everlasting perfection of thy Almighty person, and in the all-sufficient efficacy of thy blood and righteousness, to stand completely justified before God! Living and dying, in time, and to all eternity, here is my perfect assurance. As the Holy Ghost hath testified, so my faith finds the confidence; "being complete in Him, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily, and who is the head of all principality and power." (Col. ix. 10.)

THE

# BRAZEN SERPENT

## IN THE WILDERNESS.

### HOLY SCRIPTURE.

¶ "And they journeyed from Mount Hor, by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom; and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

"And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread; neither is there any water, and our soul loatheth this light bread." (Numb. xxi. 4, 5.)

### NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The children of Israel had now nearly finished their long campaign through the wilderness. Eight and thirty years had elapsed since the spies had been directed by the Lord to search the promised land. And now in the circuitous rout by which the Lord had led them, they were again brought near the borders of Canaan. Mount Hor lay on the most southern part of the promised land; near which, by the way of the Red Sea, they had to compass the land of their most antient and inveterate foe, the Edomites of the race of Esau. Here, Aaron was to be gathered to his people, and not enter Canaan. But though deprived, of the type, Aaron had the substance. Though the Lord suffered him not to see the earthly

inheritance of Israel, he had the promise, the Lord himself, even the Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly Canaan. It leads to a most sweet and sacred improvement, and of a spiritual nature, when under divine teaching, the children of God can, and do, trace their mercies through earthly things up to Christ himself in heavenly things. The divine sovereignty is never so blessedly seen, and never so blessedly acknowledged and enjoyed, as when in the midst of apparently thwarting providences, the fulfilment of the Lord's promises is more eminently discoverable. We then behold the Lord carrying on his own holy will, by his own unerring wisdom; and in the very moment of what from our dim sighted view, in this twilight state of being, we conclude to be unfavourable; bringing forth from the very dispensation itself, the reverse of what we expected; and manifesting his faithfulness to his covenant promises, to a thousand generations. "I know the thoughts I think towards you (saith the Lord) thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jer. xxix. 11.) Thus Aaron died in Mount Hor, and not in Canaan. But Aaron, like all the patriarchs of the covenant, died in faith; "not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them; and confessed that they were stangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Heb. xi. 13.)

The like dispensation was in the lot of Moses. It was but in the following year, when on the banks of Edrei, the last battle was fought which Israel had to contend for, with the enemies who opposed his way towards the confines of Canaan. And here the Lord gave him a complete victory over Og, king of Bashan. When therefore the man of God had seen this final triumph over all the host of foes this side Jordan; and as he stood on the skirts of that sacred

river, in the fruitful country of Bashan, and with an eye of faith looking over to the promised land, and contemplating but this one remove more, and Israel would "enter into that rest appointed for the people of God;" the soul of Moses was on fire as he pondered the vast subject; and it caused him to break out in that fervent prayer, which the Holy Ghost hath recorded for the church's perpetual instruction and delight: "O Lord God! thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand; for what God is there in heaven or in earth that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon." (Deut. iii. 24.) But the Lord said, No!

The Lord graciously led him to the top of Pisgah, and shewed him that goodly land, which the Lord had sworn unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto their seed: but the Lord said, "I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes; but thou shalt not go over thither." And then it is added: "So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there, in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord:" or, as it might have been rendered, and as some have rendered the phrase, "died upon the mouth of the Lord;" that is, he sweetly breathed out his soul into the arms of the Lord. And what a blessed exchange did Moses hereby make! True, indeed, it might have been desirable to nature, that having weathered all the tempests of the forty years sojourning in the wilderness, Moses would have taken part, and felt joy in seeing the felicity of Israel. If there be a cause upon earth to reconcile a child of God to a continuance here below, when once brought by sovereign grace into "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," it is to enjoy the Lord in

his ordinances, and to behold the enjoyment of the Lord's people, in his ordinances; to see the favour the Lord beareth to his people, and the visiting them with his salvation.

One of the Old Testament saints very blessedly expressed this, when he said; "That I may see the good of thy chosen; that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy people; and that I may glory with thine inheritance." (Psalm cvi. 4, 5.) But how desirable soever this may appear: yet the Lord's thoughts are not our thoughts; neither are our ways his ways. Very blessed as it is to see the goings of our God and King in his sanctuary here below; infinitely transcendent is the blessedness when we are brought from the outer court of the Lord's house here on earth, to enter into the inner court in heaven. Paul felt this, when he said; "having a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better." (Philip. i. 23.)

I pray the reader, not to pass away from this view of the subject, until that he hath first considered the improvement in that spiritual and scriptural sense, which may be made of it. There can be no doubt in relation to the very blessed state in which Moses the man of God stood before God. We are told that "there arose not a prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." (Deut. xxxiv. 10.) And yet this highly favoured servant of the Lord, could not be indulged with what he so much wished. Hence we learn the importance of studying the Divine Sovereignty in all things. And it is of all subjects the most precious and profitable. For when I see that sovereignty engaged for me in all things; bringing about the purposes, counsel, and will of Jehovah; and when I see that in the exercise of that sovereignty, love and wisdom are combined, and all perfections harmonizing to the Lord's glory and his people's good; I feel an holy

confidence in the contemplation; and am convinced that however exercised I may be in seemingly thwarting providences, yet the issue must be right. Let those cloudy providences seem to frown as they may: this view of the Lord enables the child of God, to behold behind them an everlasting sun-shine. When this very Aaron had his two sons smitten before his face, for his rebellion against God; the father however pained, held his peace. (Levit. x. 3.) And when Eli received the trembling message from the Lord concerning his children; a sense of divine sovereignty silenced every murmur; "It is the Lord, (said the old man,) let him do what seemeth him good." (1 Sam. iii. 18.) Oh! it is very sweet and blessed, amidst all the dispensations the church is exercised with in the present wilderness state, to "stand still and see the salvation of God." The Lord's providences may appear in a gloomy aspect; Aaron may be appointed for death in Mount Hor, and Moses in Mount Pisgah; but God was as much their God in death as life. While they lived, they lived to the Lord; and when they died, they died to the Lord: "so that whether living or dying, they were still the Lord's." (Rom. xiv. 8.)

And are there not numberless instances of a like nature, which the Lord in his providences is carrying on now: to make manifest the riches of his grace to his people? Oh! yes. Every child of God, whom the Lord hath brought out of darkness into light, may find many such in his own history. How oft have I seen in my insignificant life, proofs of the kind! When the Shimeis of the present hour, as to David of old, have come forth to curse me, and have thrown stones and dust at me; while not one of the stones ever wounded me, as we read not that any did him; the Lord hath done by me, as by David, converted their curses into blessings. (2 Sam. xvi. 5—13.) So

that now, from long custom, I am always pleased upon every new attack, and instantly conclude as soon as it takes place, good will follow. Yea, I am wont to say; My Lord is about to bestow some new honour upon me, as I perceive by the railing of the scorner. And so it always proves. Oh! how blessed to be in the daily practical use of that sweet promise: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." (Psalm lxxvi. 10.) So much of their wrath as shall do his people good shall be shewn; the rest shall ferment in their own bosom, to their own evil.

But we must not stop here:—The study of God's sovereignty comes home recommended and endeared to the regenerated child of God, on another account; namely, not only as it concerns the Lord's people, but as ministering to the glory of the Lord himself. Could we enter into suitable apprehensions of the infinite plan of our God in his dispensations; and behold, as God doth, at one view how the various events according to his sovereign appointment, are directed to the accomplishment of all his purposes, counsel, will and pleasure; every event relating to ourselves would then be received by us, when under the sweet constraining influence of grace, as so many parts in the great whole; which are in their very nature indispensable. Like the prophet's vision, which opened before him a vast and complicated machine, wheel within wheel, and which no human eye could unravel; but when the prophet was permitted to behold One, like the Son of Man in the midst, guiding and directing all, the difficulty of the government therein was at once removed. (Ezek. i. 26.) And as in the construction of our bodies, not a nerve, vein, or muscle, could be placed in any other part than what it is, for the benefit of all; so in the dispensations of the Lord in his providences to his

people, not a single event can take place which might have been otherwise arranged, so as to bring about the Lord's purposes in his divine sovereignty, ministering to his own glory, and his people's welfare. Very blessedly the prophet runs this whole doctrine up to its eternal source, when saying: "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." (Isaiah xxviii. 29.) Hence the death of Moses in the Mount, and the prohibition to this highly-favoured servant of the Lord, not to go over Jordan, nor tread the earthly Canaan, was among the *all things,* which while ministering to the Lord's glory, no less was "working together for good to them that love God." Indeed, Moses, as the deliverer of the law to the Israelites, and thereby typically representing the law, could not carry the Lord's people into Canaan. "For the law made nothing pefect; but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God." (Heb. vii. 19.) This belonged to Joshua to accomplish, as a type of our most glorious Christ.

I must not dismiss this part of our subject, without again calling the reader's attention, (and if he be a child of God, earnestly and affectionately recommending him) to the study of the divine sovereignty. The habitual frame of the mind, in the instances of every redeemed and regenerated child of God, to this holy submission, who is conversant with this glorious perfection of our covenant God, will carry him through all the dark paths into which the Lord in his providence sometimes leads his people. The man so taught walks in lowliness of heart toward the Lord during the midnight hour, until the day dawn, and the day star ariseth again before him. It was this which supported the man of Uz, under all his exercises. He knew enough of God, to stay himself

upon God; so that he could, and did say. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." (Job xiii. 15.) And many a child of God hath, through grace, been able to say the same; yea, and as the prophet expresseth it: "to lift up his voice, and sing for the majesty of the Lord; and cry aloud from the sea, and glorify the Lord in the fires." (Isa. xxiv. 14, 15.) Nay, to such an holy frame of resignation to the divine sovereignty, is the redeemed and regenerated child of God enabled to bow down to the Lord; that even in hell itself, were it possible for the Lord's sovereignty to lead him there, in the midst of the blasphemies of the place, the love of God would break forth in the heart of the redeemed and regenerated, in blessing God for what he is in himself; and for the love which in his Trinity of persons, he hath manifested to the church in Christ. And it was this, no doubt, which brought up the mind of Moses to a steady frame of acquiescence in the divine sovereignty. For he that at one time had so enlarged a soul for the divine glory, so as to desire rather to be blotted himself out of the book of life, than that God's glory should be questioned by the profane lips of the Egyptians, (Exod. xxxii. 12—32.) could not upon all other occasions but rest satisfied in the divine sovereignty. There is somewhat truly blessed in this frame of soul, when grace is in lively exercise in the breast of the redeemed and regenerated child of God, to enjoy it. And as there can be no question, but that in that perfection of being to which the church of God will be brought in that upper and brighter world, when all that selfishness we now have will be done away; the sole glory of Jehovah, in his Trinity of persons, as he will be the more openly manifested in the person of our most glorious Christ, will form the soul happiness of all his people; so now the exercise of it, by faith, must be the highest

attainment of our renewed spirits, in the contemplation of the divine glory; as Jehovah is in himself, and the Trinity of his divine Essence, Being, and Attributes: as existing in his Trinity of Persons; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The children of Israel, having mourned for Aaron, according to the days of mourning, a whole month, now left Mount Hor, where the ashes of the High Priest had been deposited; and where they now rest in hope until the resurrection morn. In the prosecuting of their journey towards Canaan, they compassed the land of Edom, by the way of the Red Sea. This was rather circuitous, and might have been shortened, if Edom had allowed Israel a passage through his borders. But Edom would not. And happy would it have been for Israel, had Israel made the proper use intended from this refusal by the Lord. Edom was of the race of Esau, sworn foe to Israel; and whom the Lord called "the border of wickedness; and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever." (Malachi i. 3, 4.) This was in the over-ruling power and appointment of God. Nothing more destructive to the peace and welfare of the Lord's people, than when they "mingle among the heathen, and learn their works." Hence the blessedness of the Lord's providence over his people, in causing the ungodly to thwart and oppose them. When the Egyptians oppressed Israel of old, and made their lives bitter by their rigorous bondage, who would have thought that the Lord's hand was in all this, to unsettle the minds of his people, and to prepare them for the Lord's deliverance of them from Egypt. That sweet Scripture hath explained the whole, and would be of perpetual use to the people of God, in accounting for numberless instances of a like nature, which the Lord's people meet with from the ungodly; "He turned their

heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants." (Psalm cv. 25.) Oh! What a light hath this one Scripture thrown upon numberless occasions in life, and what a relief hath it brought with it to comfort my mind, when in the opposition of open enemies, and false friends, I have been enabled to look over the head of the oppressors; and behold the Lord over-ruling his intended evil for good.

And had Israel interpreted Edom's refusal in this light, and beheld the graciousness of God hereby opening a more illustrious plan for his loving kindness to be manifested in the ungraciousness of man; the anger of Edom would have led Israel to the greater enjoyment of the love of God. But alas! the reverse took place; for we read that "the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spaek against God, and against Moses; Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread." (Numb. xxi. 4, 5.) Here is a sad page again of Israel's history. Indeed, what is the whole of Israel's history, from beginning to end, but a series of rebellion on the part of man, and an uninterrupted manifestation of grace on the part of God. True it was, that a long pilgrimage, and marked with much conflict, had stirred up the corruption of their fallen nature; yet equally true it was, that every opposition from without, and anxiety from within, had not only afforded the opportunity for the manifestation of the Lord's love to Israel, but had continually brought forth the testimonies of it afresh. The little army of Gideon, which we read of in the book of the Judges, affords a different history. It is said of him and his men, that they "were faint, yet pursuing." (Judges viii. 4.) And the Lord's army is, or ought to be, such in all their holy

warfare. Grace and corruption must have their battlings all the way; and the regenerated soldier of Christ can never be suffered to unbuckle his armour until the Lord undresseth him for the grave. But while faint in ourselves, from the many assaults of sin and Satan, yet pursuing in the strength of the Lord, and in the power of his might, we go on conquering and to conquer. And what gives vigour and renewed energy, after every fresh assault of the foes of our salvation, is the consciousness and assurance, that the warfare in which the redeemed and regenerated church of God is engaged, is not doubtful; the victory is certain; for our most glorious Christ hath, by his own arm, gotten himself the victory. And the promise to all his army is to the same assurance: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." (Isa. xl. 29—31.)

Who can read the expressions of Israel in this awful contumacy against God without trembling? Who could suppose it possible after so many years of the Lord's tender leadings of his people through the wilderness, and amidst the manifold interpositions for Israel, which the Lord had shewn them in delivering them from their enemies all the way long, that such renewed rebellions should again break out among them? Was it dearth, or intended dearth, to feed them miraculously with bread from heaven day by day? And was it indeed light food given them by the Lord, which had sustained them in health now for near forty years? But alas! we read the history of Israel, and of the church of God *then*, to little

profit, if we do not connect with it, the same history in the present Israel and the church of God *now*. May we not say in the words of the apostle, "What then are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." (Rom. iii. 9.) Oh! the preciousness of our most glorious Christ.

I must not suffer the reader to pass away from this part of the history of Israel, in what is here related of their despising the manna as *light bread,* and expressing their *soul-loathing it,* without first making one or two observations; for in my view, it is too interesting to be overlooked. *Soul-loathing* hath respect to somewhat more than the mere rejection or disapprobation of the food for the body; for what hath the soul to do with "the bread of the body that perisheth with using?" Evidently the very expression is of spiritual tendency. And when we observe what the Holy Ghost hath said on this subject by his servant Paul, calling it *spiritual meat;* there can be no difficulty in discovering wherein the sin of Israel consisted, in such among them as counted the manna "light bread, and their soul loathing it." (1 Cor. iii. 4, 5.) And if we attend to our Lord's discourse upon the subject, which he delivered in the audience of the Jews, (as recorded John vi. throughout) we behold at once, that it was Christ which was typified by the manna; and that in this daily bread, the Lord while giving food from heaven for the *body,* held forth to them the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the living bread for the *soul.* It would have been the foulest baseness and ingratitude in the persons receiving their sustenance for the body, in this miraculous manner, day by day, to have called it *light bread,* with respect to the body only. For never surely, was there a people so victualled, a camp so provided, so protected, and so carried on from day to day, by the kind

providence of God. Six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, had come out of Egypt; and now for forty years together their supplies had never failed; but their bread came from heaven for them, new and pure every morning. And the several particularities in this food were such as were enough to have arrested the most insensible mind to attention. For the manna itself was of so delicate a nature, that if left for a day to the broiling heat of the vertical sun, it bred worms and stank. And yet the omer, which the Lord commanded to be laid up in a pot, that it might be handed down to successive generations for their children to see the bread, with which the Lord had fed their fathers in the wilderness, continued sweet and unsullied. So that even in a providential sense only, to call that *light bread*, which came so wonderfully day by day from heaven, and was possessed of such miraculous qualities, was foul ingratitude in the extreme. But when this food was considered, in a spiritual nature, as typical of Christ; to say "their soul loatheth it," made their sin assume a complexion of a blacker kind; and arose to a magnitude which called forth the just judgment of God. Hence we are told "that their carcases fell in the wilderness;" and as the following Scripture rehearseth it; "the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, which bit the people; and much people of Israel died." (Num. xxi. 6.)

And let not the reader, (for whose spiritual improvement, under divine teaching, I have detained him in all these observations,) overlook what the Holy Ghost hath graciously said in his divine comment upon his history. "Now these things (saith the Lord) were written for our example, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they lusted. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." (1 Cor. x. 6. 11.)

Christ is our bread of life, the true manna; yea, the *hidden manna,* which the Lord Jesus himself saith he will give to eat of, "to him that overcometh." (Rev. ii. 17.) In Christ we have the *written word;* for man liveth not "by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. iv. 4.) And in Christ we have the "uncreated word." (John i. 1.) And he it is that saith, "The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life." (John vi. 63.) Oh! for grace, to live upon this true manna; this hidden manna; and day by day to be going forth in all the awakenings of the soul, saying, "Lord! evermore give us this bread."

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." (Numb. xxi. 6.)

### NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

There is a striking analogy between the first original fall of our nature in the garden of Eden; when at the instance of the serpent's beguiling Eve, our whole nature was involved in all the ruins of the fall; and the punishment in the bite of those fiery serpents in the wilderness, by which many of the people died. It was that "old serpent, called the devil and satan: which deceived the whole world: (as Scripture expresseth it, Rev. xii. 9.) which first tempted to sin; and the fiery serpents, of whose bite the people died in the wilderness, became a very apt resemblance of the same; connecting the crime with the punishment.

But what I would particularly, upon the present

occasion, beg to call to the reader's attention on this subject is this; namely, that while our whole nature is all alike involved in the same sinful state; and no one, neither son nor daughter of Adam, is more fallen or more sinful one than another; the church in Christ hath a thousand and ten thousand mercies, from her union with Christ, of which, however unconscious during the whole time of our unrenewed nature, are still the church's blessings more or less, as may be in the special lot of the Lord's people. The Holy Ghost, by his servant Jude, hath very blessedly expressed this; and thereby given authority to the church of God to know it; for, when speaking of the church, he calls her *sanctified,* or set apart "by the Father; preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." (Jude i.) So that there is a preservation *in* Christ, before that we are called *to* Christ. And who shall say to what extent this preservation in Christ reacheth, during the whole state of our unregeneracy; and before that the highly favoured objects of such grace and mercy, are brought into any spiritual knowledge of it? How shall I, or you, or any other redeemed and regenerated child of God, calculate the many manifestations of the kind by which we were kept from going down into the pit, because the Lord had found a ransom; when neither the conscious want of a ransom, nor concern about a ransom, had ever entered our mind; no; nor even the Lord himself, the Almighty Ransomer, was in our knowledge or regard?

In my apprehension, this view of the Lord, and his preserving grace over his people, opens to one of the sweetest of all possible subjects. And though until "the day dawn, and the day star hath arisen in the heart," there can be no consciousness of it; yet when enabled by that sovereign act to discern things spiritually, I would cherish it with all the warmth of

affection. It should lie down with me, and arise up with me. And looking up for grace to guide me in all the vicissitudes of life, to watch over the comings forth, and the footsteps of the Lord to whose watchings over me during the whole days and years of my unregeneracy, I now *can*, and *do*, ascribe all my deliverances and preservations. And in every instance where an unction from the Lord is shewn, to give a spiritual understanding to this subject, sure I am that the redeemed and regenerated child of God will find blessings of a special and personal nature; such as to the superficial beholder would pass and repass unnoticed. Carnal men behold nothing of the Lord's hand, more than the mere shell of the thing, either in the departments of nature, providence, or grace; but the Lord's people, taught of the Lord, will discover the Lord's hand in all. The beast of the field will overlook and trample down many a flower, from whence the bee of the hive would extract both honey and wax. So diversified are all the ways and works of the Lord, as they appear in their improvements by gracious, or their misimprovements by ungodly, men. Hence the Holy Ghost, after recapitulating through a long but sweet psalm, the distinguishing mercies of the Lord over his people, makes this blessed conclusion from the whole: "Whoso is wise, and will ponder these things; even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." (Psalm cvii. 43.)

I have been led into this train of observation from the perusal of the short but striking verse at the head of this paper. "The Lord (it is said) sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much of the people of Israel died." There was enough in this judgment for the spiritual Israel to discern, and to connect with it the original sin of man by the temptation of the serpent; and the punishment of death which the Lord God pronounced in consequence thereof in the

bite of the serpent. How came it to pass, that those fiery serpents should now spend their venom upon the people, when all along through the wilderness the people had sustained no injury from them whatever? Moses had very particularly dwelt upon this circumstance of special mercy; when, in describing the Lord's goodness to Israel all the way along, he called the attention of the people to this vast subject: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, and to show what was in thine heart; whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint. Who fed thee in the wilderness, with manna, which thy fathers knew not; that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end." (Deut. viii. 2—16.) How came it then to pass that the Lord should now send those serpents to bite the people, whom the Lord had caused to flee from Israel, all the way before? Were those venomous creatures let loose to the fury of their nature, because Israel had offended the Lord; and did they now take part with the Lord, against the people, because they had despised the Lord? Ah! how sure it is that the Lord can arm an host of foes, and bring forth his artillery from any thing, from every thing, even the beast of the field, to war against them that war against the Lord.

And let the reader not fail to observe the cause of this quarrel: namely, their souls "loathing this light bread;" that is, despising Christ. And let the reader farther consider who they were that despised Christ! Not the faithful. Not the Calebs, nor the Joshuas, as before in the searching the promised land, which also

was typical of Christ. "For all are not Israel, (saith the Holy Ghost, by Paul,) which are of Israel. Neither because they are the children of Abraham, are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called." But the mere carnal Israel had no part or lot in the matter. And agreeably to this, we find the Lord, by his servant the prophet Ezekiel, promising that when he pleaded with his people in the wilderness, he will cause those that were among them to pass under the rod. And the Lord then added; "I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me; I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn; and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord." (Ezek. xx. 35—38.)

But to manifest yet farther the distinguishing nature of grace, in separating the "precious from the vile;" it is very blessed to observe in the camp of Israel, even in the midst of these judgments, how the faithful were preserved, when the besom of destruction swept away the ungodly. It is said that "much people of Israel died;" but it is no where said, that any one died in the number, but such as had called the manna "light bread;" and in contempt of soul had "loathed it." Oh! had we our spiritual apprehensions more alive, that with enlightened eyes we could plainly discover what the apostle calls, "the hope of Christ's calling;" (Eph. i. 18.) how should we then behold, amidst "the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the sickness that destroyeth in the noon day;" how the Lord when sending forth his messengers of death, whether by men or beasts, limits the destroyer, as to those of old, with similar direction: "Come not near any man upon whom is the mark!" (Ezek. ix. 4—6.) Very sweetly the Holy Ghost hath shewn this in many parts of Scripture; but in none more striking than in that beautiful one

by his servant the prophet Hosea: when speaking of the safety and happiness of his people, when the Lord had taken the names of Baalim out of their mouth; the Lord adds; "And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field; and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and I will break the bow and the sword, and the battle out of the earth, and will make them lie down safely." (Hosea ii. 17, 18.) Thus the Lord maketh all creatures to be at peace with his people, when they are at peace with him. But in the departures, and backslidings of his own, the Lord exerciseth an holy jealousy; and when they do not lay it to heart, their very comforts he turns into sorrows; and even curseth their blessings. He saith himself: "to punish the breach of his holy covenant." (Malachi ii. 2.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people." (Numb. xxi. 7.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I BESEECH the reader to notice this verse, and the opening of it very particularly: "Therefore the people came to Moses." Who were they of the people that came to Moses? May it be supposed that all the survivors came? It will be well to hope so for charity's sake; for in that case the awful judgment before their eyes, had made (at least for the time,) a suitable impression upon them. But I think it highly probable,

that many of the Lord's people among the younger branches of the house of Israel, might be of those that came to Moses. The reader will recollect that when, in the case of the untrue spies returning with an evil report from searching the Promised Land, the Lord sware that not one of them should go over Jordan to the possession of it. But said the Lord, in great grace, "Your little ones, which ye say should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the Lord which ye have despised. (Numb. xiv. 31.) It is possible therefore, that those might be among the supplicants to Moses. And from beholding the tremendous death of the ungodly in their carcases before their eyes, they felt compassion for those that survived; and like the great father of the faithful, when drawing nigh to the Lord, in his intercession for Sodom, hoped that the Lord had some chosen ones among the remnant that were left, for which the Lord would withdraw his judgment. (Gen. xviii. 23, &c.) And it is possible among those that came, there were others also, who, led away by the rebellion of the multitude, had in their hearts (as many of the Lord's people do in the days of their unregeneracy) followed their pernicious ways, until brought back by sovereign grace to the acknowledging the truth; that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. In either case, and in both, what a subject for reflection doth it open to melt the heart of saint and sinner! Every redeemed and regenerated saint of God, whom the Lord hath brought to the knowledge of himself, may well exclaim in the review of it, with the astonished Apostle: "Lord! how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John xvi. 22.) And the sinner no less, when from the destruction of the ungodly around, he hath been awakened by such providences of distinguishing mercy, and brought out from among them to the

knowledge of the Lord; like the shipwrecked mariner, brought to shore by an hand unseen, looks back on the floating carcases of his late companions which have perished in the storm; and cry out in the language of Scripture: "Who remembered me in my lost estate; for his mercy endureth for ever."

I will only detain the reader with a short observation more on this interesting passage; namely, of the people being brought to a sense of sin, and a sense of their danger by the Lord's sent judgments. This feature of acknowledgment, in the Lord's people, is what the Lord all along made the very land-mark of their looking for pardon and mercy. In that beautiful chapter, Levit. xxvi. throughout; where the Lord proceeds by a regular process of the chastisement of his people, from one degree of punishment to another, and from the less to the greater; the Lord continually, at every one, makes this the standard of decision: "But if ye will not be reformed by me, by these things, but will walk contrary to me, then will I also walk contrary to you; and will punish you yet seven times more for your sins." At length, after again and again repeating the denunciation, the Lord closeth in with his unparalleled declaration of grace and mercy, and saith; "When they that are left of you shall pine away in your iniquity; if then you shall confess your iniquity, and the iniquity of your fathers, with your trespass that you have trespassed against me; and that you have walked contrary to me, and that I also have walked contrary unto you; and your uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and you accept the punishment of your iniquity; then will I remember my covenant with Jacob; and also my covenant with Isaac; and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and will I remember the land."

The same gracious doctrine is most blessedly

stated by Ezra, upon the remarkable occasion of Israel's transgression, in making affinity with the people of the nations: "O my God, (said Ezra,) I am ashamed, and blush to lift my face to thee my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." (Ezra ix. 6.) And to mention no more, the prophet Jeremiah, in the time of dearth, states the very deplorable state of Judah; when the nobles sent their little ones to the pits, and found no water, and returned with their vessels empty, ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. When the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass. The prophet puts forth his earnest cry of soul under the deepest sense of the transgression of the people, acknowledging their sin, but laying hold of the covenant in God: "Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? Hath thy soul loathed Zion? Why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble. We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniqnity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee. Do not abhor us for thy name sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us." (Jer. xiv. 19—21.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live.

"And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived." (Numb. xxi. 8, 9.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

HERE is, according to my apprehensions of spiritual things, one of the most illustrious types of our most glorious Christ, in all the Scriptures; as I have already observed in my "Poor Man's Commentary on the Bible," on the passage both in the Old Testament and the New. But in addition to what I have there offered, (for the subject is abundantly copious to furnish matter for endless discourse,) I will request the reader to follow me through the several particulars of this wonderful history, one by one; and looking at the whole through the medium of the gospel, when his mind hath felt the full impression of the several contents, I hope he will find grace to bend the knee with me to the Almighty Author of all Scripture, God the Holy Ghost, who was graciously pleased to shadow forth by such a process to the Old Testament saints, what was to be accomplished under the gospel dispensation for the joy of New Testament believers; that both might be made partakers of the same unspeakable grace, which is in Christ Jesus. It is impossible that any mistake can arise in the application of the whole as typical to Christ; because the Son of God himself hath so pointedly declared it. And therefore we may very safely go over the whole history with an eye to Christ. And if the Lord, the Spirit, who hath given the church this record, shall graciously accompany our present review of it with the unction of his divine teaching, sure I am, that the savour of Christ's name through every part of it, will be, "as the ointment poured forth."

I begin with observing the striking analogy in this history of the camp of Israel, between the sin and the punishment. "Sin entered into the world, and

death by sin." It was by the subtilty of the serpent, that the great enemy of souls ruined our first parents. And what are all the sad consequences of that original introduction of sin, which is inherent in our nature, breaking out as it doth in actual transgression, but like the *fiery darts* of the same! (Eph. vi. 16.) It is a stong expression of Scripture, speaking of the effects of sin, when it is said: "It biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." (Prov. xxiii. 32.)

But what are all the bites of serpents, or the stings of adders, which reach no farther than the death of the body, compared to those everlasting stings of conscience, which, if uncured by Christ, induce the second death of the soul; whose superlative misery is described by the Lord Jesus, under those strong and awful figures: "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched." (Mark ix. 44, 46, 48.) A death, whose very life (if the expression he warrantable) is an everlasting existence of death and dying: where the awful beings seek death, and cannot find it; and desire to die, but death fleeth from them. (Rev. ix. 6.) Such is sin, in all its tremendous consequences; the sure and ultimate state of all that die out of Christ.

*Secondly.*—The remedy which the Lord prescribed to Israel, for the bite of the serpent in the wilderness; namely, the representation of a serpent made of brass. This also was figurative. For apparently what affinity was there between the disease and the proposed cure? Evidently in the very command, Moses and the people could not but at once discover, that if the remedy succeeded, it must be miraculous. And indeed in an hot climate, like that wilderness which Israel was then in, those reptiles abounded; and where the sun's heat in the day must for the most part have been intense; while the poison of the serpent was raging through their whole frame from its venom; the burnished and shining brass if looked upon,

(speaking after the manner of men) must have added fuel to fire, and increased the madness in the brain ten fold. But this was the Lord's prescribed remedy and not man's; and the sequel of the history manifested both the Lord's wisdom, and his grace in the appointment.

*Thirdly.*—Thus far the church, in the subsequent generations from the days of Moses might and would have read the wonderful history of the Lord's grace to Israel in such a means of cure; and on this occasion, as upon many others, every child of God, taught of God, in the contemplation would have exclaimed: "For his mercy endureth for ever;" but had not the Lord Jesus Christ himself given his comment and illustration of it, we should never have seen what, through his blessed and divine teaching, we now see, the ground upon which the Lord prescribed this very remedy for Israel; and that through the whole and every part of it, the Lord Jesus Christ himself was preached in type and figure. We might indeed have concluded, being taught of God, that both Israel's pardon and Israel's cure was *then*, as it is *now*; and in all ages of the church, can only be, in and through, and for Christ. Some indeed of the Lord's people, under the Lord's unction, might have been led to connect this part of Israel's history, as being miraculously healed, by looking as commanded to the figure of a serpent, with that first and most precious promise which came in immediately at the fall; "that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head;" and from knowing that the cure could only be *in* and *by* Christ, they might have discovered a beautiful coincidence between those Scriptures. But never would it have entered into the mind of man, untaught of God, and without our adorable Lord's own illustration of it, that the serpent Moses lifted up in the wilderness prefigured Christ: and more especially under those astonishing

features of representation with which the subject is connected, none would, nor could have ventured to conceive; nay, none would or could have supposed it. Hear the sweet, the precious, the gracious, words of our most glorious Christ, upon the subject, as expressed by himself; and then, "the Lord give (if it be his holy will, both to writer and reader,) a right understanding in all things." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John iii. 14, 15.)

The first observation that I would propose on those words of our most glorious Christ, is in relation to his person. His person, as I have often remarked, is the great object of faith; as his salvation is the great subject of hope. The right apprehension therefore of his person, spiritually and scripturally considered, can be the only security for the right foundation of trust in him. It forms a standard of decision in the word of God: "They that know thy name (that is thy person) will put their trust in thee." (Psalm ix. 10.) But none can trust an unknown Christ. Now in relation to Christ's person, and particularly with an eye to our present subject, (if the Lord be our teacher,) we shall behold Christ in this high character, as he here calls himself, "the Son of Man," in his double nature, God and Man in One person. Hence we receive him as the Christ of God; the sent of God; the Sponsor, the Surety, the Redeemer of his church and people. Now, saith our adorable Lord, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." And doing as we are commanded to do "not speaking in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual;" (1 Cor. ii. 13.)

we here discover (under the Lord's teaching, the needs be, both for Moses's lifting up the serpent in the wilderness; and Christ being lifted up on the cross; that in the former instance of the *servant*, every type and shadow which prefigured Christ might be held forth to the Old Testament saints; to shew them by shadowy representations, what would be accomplished in substance under the New Testament dispensation; as being both alike interested in one and the same salvation:—and in the latter instance of the *Master*, the Lord of glory might be lifted up: and thus complete the salvation which that and other types prefigured; to the end that, under both dispensations, "whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life."

And it is most blessed as we trace this subject under the several different features of it, to behold what a wonderful coincidence of circumstances in those shadowy representations were made of our most glorious Christ in every one, and in all. Moses was the servant of his Lord and Master; not only to lift up the serpent as typical of Christ; but also of every other, more or less, which pointed either by express representation, or distinct allusion, to the Lord Jesus. Hence if the lamb of the morning, or the lamb of the evening, were offered in sacrifice; if in the passover the flesh was eaten, and the blood sprinkled; if the rock was smitten to give water to Israel; if the scape goat was sent away by the hand of some fit man into the wilderness, when the High Priest had confessed over him "all the iniquities of the children of Israel; and all their transgressions in all their sins;' putting them upon the head of the goat;" (Levit. xvi. 21, 22.) all these, and every other, were the blessed methods which God the Holy Ghost, the Almighty Founder of the church, graciously appointed in preaching Christ to his church and peo-

ple, under that wilderness dispensation. All this is so plainly and so beautifully set forth and explained by the Lord, the Spirit, in Scripture, in various parts, that it would be a superfluous service upon the present occasion to offer more. The Holy Ghost in proof hath indeed largely dwelt upon it in his epistle to the Hebrews; and after recapitulating many of the leading points, he adds: "The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as yet the first tabernacle was yet standing." But while all these ministered, as they were intended to minister, in preaching Christ to the church; there is such a peculiar beauty in this of the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness, to shew that Christ in the after age of the gospel was to be lifted up, "in finishing transgression, making an end of sin, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness;" as doth merit our most particular attention. It hath indeed in it so much sweetness, so much blessedness, in bringing home our most glorious Christ to the hearts of his redeemed ones, in this endearing and condescending humbleness of character, as evidently proves the love of our most adorable Lord thereby; and that he will be known to the tenderest affections of his people by this service.

For the better apprehension of it, the reader should remember that Christ in his high character of Redeemer and Saviour, was made both a sin and a curse for his people; "that having redeemed us from the the curse of the law; and being made sin for us, who knew no sin, we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (Gal. iii. 13. 2 Cor. v. 21.) Now none of the creatures of God, which the Holy Ghost was pleased to appoint, might represent typically our glorious Lord, under all the various characters he would sustain. The *scape goat* might be made to represent our Almighty burden bearer, in

having Aaron putting both his hands on the goat, when the Lord shadowed forth thereby, that "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. liii. 6.) And the lamb became no unapt figure and shadow of the "Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world." But as there was no creature of God, that was accursed of God but the serpent; if the Holy Ghost will be pleased (as to our great comfort the Lord hath been pleased) that our most glorious Christ shall be represented in the old church, as he was actually set forth in the new; "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, and being made a curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; then the serpent among all the creatures of God became the only one which could have been a type; and most striking and blessed it certainly is to every redeemed and regenerated child of God, to behold the Lord of life and glory thus lifted up; to the end, that "whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." Precious, precious Lord Jesus! cause my soul to gaze on thee; to hang on thee; to find faith and confidence in thee; and evermore heartily, cordially, fully, and unceasingly, to behold in thee a complete deliverance from sin and the curse; being made by thy finished salvation, "the righteousness of God in thee."

The next observation which meets us in this delightful subject is the authority by which the man of God lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; and of the same authority in the lifting up of our most glorious Christ in the gospel; by which the church of God *now* is delivered from perishing, and hath eternal life, as the church of God was *then*, in looking with faith to the brazen serpent by which they lived. Moses acted but as the minister in that moment of danger in the wilderness. And the ministers of Christ under the gospel do no other now. But it is blessed to

behold the whole Persons in the GODHEAD, all concurring and co-operating in the wonders of salvation. God the Father is said to have given his Son; to have sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. (John iii. 16. 1 John iv. 14.) God the Son so loved the church as to give himself for the church, "an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour." (Eph. v. 12.) And God the Holy Ghost it is that lifts up the Lord Jesus in the hearts and consciences of his people, glorifieth his person, and glorifieth his work; "and takes of the things of Christ, and sheweth unto them." (John xvi. 14.)

Neither must we omit one observation more; in that our Lord saith, that as the dying Israelite looked unto the brazen serpent and lived; so looking unto Christ, and believing on him, is everlasting life. And it is our mercy, that the Lord, that provides the remedy, gives power to receive it. Faith is the gift of God. So that when the Lord Jesus saith, as he doth by the prophet: "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else;" (Isaiah xlv. 22.) in this precept the promise is blended together. The Lord, that issues the command, gives grace to obey. "It is God that worketh in his people, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure."

And now I commit the whole to the blessing of our most gracious Lord God, with full assurance of faith, that an unction from on high may accompany the perusal to all his people. Surely we have a well founded hope that the Lord will do so! For did God the Holy Ghost, graciously appoint such a service in the camp of Israel *then*, to prefigure our most glorious Christ, and render it blessed; and will he not as graciously render the perusal of it as profitable to his Israel *now?* Did the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, send his own Son "in the likeness of sinful

flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit; (Rom. viii. 3, 4.) and will he not, "having made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, (mercifully grant) that we might be made the righteousness of God in him?" (2 Cor. v. 21.) And did the Lord of life and glory, in reference to this transaction in the church of old, himself say, "that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life?" (John iii. 14, 15.) Oh! then surely the thing is certain. There will be, there must be, a savour of the Lord's grace, upon the Lord's dispensations; and as the church of old was *then* so blessed in looking to the type and shadow; every redeemed and regenerated child of God *now* will be enabled to look to the substance signified; and in the person of our most glorious Christ find assured salvation; and, with the prophet, say: "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and glory." (Isaiah xlv. 21.)

Blessed God! give to all thy church and people grace to be everlastingly refreshed in the unceasing contemplation of our most glorious Christ; both in his almighty person and in his almighty work. Yes! precious, gracious Lord Jesus; as thou art still lifted up in thy blessed gospel, the whole of salvation to thy people; so let my soul rest on thee, as complete in thee; until faith is swallowed up in open vision, and present peace, in the blood of the cross, is followed in everlasting glory. Cause my eyes, my heart, my every spiritual affection, to gaze on thee, "with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of my faith, even the salvation of my soul." Amidst all the wounds of sin, and all the fiery darts of the wicked, here let my soul fix her unceasing

contemplation. And while in thy person, blood, and righteousness, I find a balm of spiritual healing, and an everlasting consolation from the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to my person as I am in Christ, I may pass on through all that yet remains to be filled in, in this wilderness state, until I come to see thee as thou art, and dwell with thee for ever. Amen.

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## THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION.

### HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart."

"And was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." (Matt. xvii. 1, 2.)

### NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

We here enter upon one of the most sublime portions of the word of God; and such as relates to a subject in which the church of God is most highly interested; such indeed as requires continual unction from the Lord, to receive a true spiritual apprehension of it in the mind and understanding; and of consequence such as demands from every redeemed and

regenerated child of God, the most profound reverence and godly fear; "that we may know the things which are freely given to us of God," (1 Cor. ii. 12.) Of such magnitude is the study of the transfiguration in the mount of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord (if it be his blessed will) do both by writer and reader as he did by Moses at the bush, give grace, that as we enter the sacred enclosure, we may "put off the shoe from off the feet, for the place on which we stand is holy ground." And, while at every step we take, we behold with unceasing solemnity this great sight, which the Lord has made known unto us; we may feel his gracious and enlightening presence with us, "the savour of whose name is as ointment poured forth."

And here, as we approach in imagination the hallowed spot, let it be observed what "a cloud of witnesses" the sacred record itself hath to endear it to our regard. The Lord was pleased to bring back from the other world, (which will be more particularly noticed when we enter into that part of the subject,) two men to be present with the apostles as spectators and witnesses of this glorious manifestation of the Lord in the mount. And so infinitely important was it considered by the Holy Ghost to the church, that he has caused three of the Evangelists to record minutely the wonderful event. We have it here by Matthew; again by Mark, ix. 2; and again by Luke, ix. 28. And the fourth Evangelist, John, who was present at the transaction, although he hath not as circumstantially related the history itself as the former have done; yet to shew how much his mind was occupied in the contemplation of it, both at the opening of his gospel, and also of his epistle, makes the glory of Christ's person the *datum* of all that followed through both. In the one he saith, "And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory the

glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." (John i. 14.) And in the other, he opens in those blessed words: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life: (for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full," (John i. 1—4.) And Peter no less, who was one of those highly favoured servants of our Lord, whom Jesus took with him for this purpose into the mount: when in the prospect of his death approaching, though an interval of full thirty years had passed from the time of the transfiguration of Christ; yet the aged apostle found his soul so warmed in the recollection of it, that he brake out in the most animated manner language could express; shewing thereby what an abiding savour had all along, from the first, been upon his mind, and which had never left him, "For," said he, "we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of his majesty. For he received, from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." (2 Pet. i. 16, 17, 18.) The apostle James hath not left any record of his upon the occasion to the church; nor indeed of any other writing. But this was because he could not. At a very early date after the

church was formed, Herod killed him with the sword, (Acts xii. 2.) But what is deficient in the want of James's testimony to Christ's transfiguration, is amply compensated by these other witnesses the Lord raised up in the church to his personal glory, as he appeared to them after his ascension. The Lord Jesus shewed himself from heaven to Stephen, just at his martyrdom, Acts vii. 55. To Paul at his conversion, Acts xxvi. 13—15. And again to John in his banishment, Rev. i. 10—18.

I pause here, to request the reader not to overlook the special and personal grace of the Lord Jesus, which in every instance was intended thereby, for the perpetual comfort of his people in all ages subsequent to these events. Indeed, I would beg of him to note it down in the most durable memorandums of his heart, in order to raise from it many a sweet instruction, as occasion may arise, for his own refreshment through life. Depend upon it, that all the manifestations which the Lord Jesus made of himself, to any of his people, and especially before the close of Scripture, had this blessed object in view from them; namely, that when Scripture went no farther in the history of our Lord, because no farther was needful, the Lord's people should call to mind those precious love tokens of Jesus, to one and to another; and in that calling to mind should take to themselves the comfort of all; that what the Lord then did *openly*, was meant as a sample of what the Lord is always doing *privately;* because the love of his heart to all his people is alike the same, and in every generation. And beyond a doubt, the Lord's spiritual dealings and the discoveries of himself are as much carried on in the present hour as of old, when they were for the establishment of the church more openly made; and will continue so until the whole church of God is brought home to heaven. And the certainty

of this blessed truth (for most blessed it is) is founded on our Lord's own words. For, speaking to his disciples on the subject, and through them to the whole church in all ages to follow, just before his sufferings, he said, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more: but ye see me; and because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.) So that this sight of Christ, which is a spiritual sight and apprehension of him, belongs to the Lord's people in common; and which becomes a decided mark of distinction from all carnal persons, whether among the professors or the profane.

If happily the reader be of the household of faith, he will do well to follow the advice which Paul gave to Timothy upon a similar occasion: "Meditate," said the old saint, "upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all." (I Tim. iv. 15.) The Lord's people, and especially the little ones, are too apt to think that holy men of old possessed advantages which the faithful in modern times do not enjoy. But this is a mistake. In all periods of the church the Lord's love is the same. And the manifestations of his love are the same, in being equally blessed, however more privately administered. We have all the benefit of their ministry in those records left behind them by the gracious ordination of God the Holy Ghost. And there is a sense in which we have more advantages than they had; namely, in that we have seen many of the prophecies fulfilled, which they only delivered. And our Lord's promise brings unceasing consolation on this and every other ground:—"The time cometh," said Jesus, "when I shall no more speak to you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father." (John xvi. 2.) Blessed be our most glorious Christ, every redeemed and regenerated child, taught of God, knoweth this in his own heart, and to his own

soul's joy. The Son of God hath shewed, and doth shew, plainly of the Father. And the sweet and gracious effect is as the Lord of life and glory promised: "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."

As we enter the holy mount of our Lord's transfiguration, and in idea are contemplating the wonders there displayed; we shall do well to call to remembrance, how the Lord had previously prepared the minds of his disciples for the expectation of this glorious scene; and more especially what the Lord Jesus taught them to apprehend of the revelation itself, as a sample of his second coming. "Verily I say unto you," said Christ, "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his glory." (Mat xvi. 28.)

This is a great point for us to regard, as we approach to the contemplation of this glorious manifestation of our most glorious Christ, in the days of his flesh. By "the Son of man coming in his glory," implied his own personal glory; and his own personal glory, as God and man in one. Not the essential glory of the divine nature, which the Son of God, as God, hath in common with the Father and the Holy Ghost. "For no man hath seen God at any time." (John i. 18.) And in the essence of his being, "no man hath seen nor can see." (1 Tim. vi. 16.) But the very appellation here given to Christ: yea, taken by Christ himself, "the Son of man," limits the revelation here made of Christ, to his mediatorial glory.

And we shall do well to consider also, as we approach the contemplation of this glorious scene in our spiritual imagination, what a gracious act it was, in our most gracious God and Saviour, to make such a blessed display of himself, in this compound of God and man, in one person; and in the very way and manner in which he will appear when he comes upon

his throne of glory, with all his holy angels! Never surely, can the imagination conceive any thing more affectionate and endearing, than by such a palpable demonstration of himself, in the presence of his saints, taken from both the Old Testament and from the New; to shew, and so many ages before his final coming, under what character he would then come; that the church from that time to the final consummation of all things, might live in the faith and expectation of it; and have their minds familiarized by the constant contemplation of his grace as shewn on the mount of transfiguration; with the pleasing hope of the same Lord Jesus Christ coming with the same heart of love to his people in the mount of glory. True, indeed, the manifestation of our Christ on this occasion, was but transient and momentary; for the present state of our nature could bear no more. It must have borne down and overwhelmed the very being of the apostles, while in a body of flesh, had the Son of God put forth all his brightness, even as God and man in one; and as he will be revealed at the last day. But it should be remembered, that then the spirits being disembodied spirits, will be prepared for his appearing. And even when the bodies of his saints at the resurrection morning, shall be raised by the Lord's own personal power, glorified bodies, to join their spirits; both will be alike ripened to the seeing Christ as he is, for to dwell with him for ever. Still as a transient glimpse only of his glory, it became as was most blessedly intended it should, a foreview and a foretaste of the sure coming of our most glorious Christ, and of the very character in which he will appear, when "he comes to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe." Such was the opening of this divine manifestation of our Lord. It was a transfiguration, as this Scripture expresses it; "his

face did shine as the sun." The apostle Paul, in his account of Christ's appearing to him, expresseth it, that it was a respledency of glory, "above the brightness of the sun." (Acts xxvi. 13.) And indeed it made him blind for three days. And the transfiguration itself is what will prove in some degree a foreview to us, as our faculties are capable of apprehending. For it was not a mere outward glory upon the face of Christ, as in the instance of Moses, the skin of whose face shone from long communion with God, (Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30.) but it was the GODHEAD shining from within. The glory of his divine nature, for the special comfort of his people, shining for a momentary glimpse to them through his human nature; and thereby confirming that precious Scripture, that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily." (Colos. ii. 9.) Hence, when we read, as in this Scripture, that "he was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light," we apprehend, that Christ was so completely glorious to the view of those that were with him in the mount, that through his garments, the Divine lustre of his person shone with such brightness, though but for a moment's manifestation, by way of specimen to the church because they could bear it no longer; and that in an infinitely higher degree, and for an everlasting continuance he will shine; because the whole church shall then be fitted to behold him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven. *Then,* as the Scripture beautifully expresseth it, "the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed;" both looking pale and eclipsed, from the glory of our most glorious Christ their maker; "when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." (Isa. xxiv. 23.)

I only detain the reader with a short observation more on those verses at the introduction of our sub-

ject, which though not of equal importance with the former, nevertheless is of too interesting a nature in relation to the church, for her improvement arising out of it, to be passed over in silence: I mean that our most gracious Lord should make choice of those three men, Peter, James, and John, from the whole college of apostles, to be eye-witnesses of his Divine Majesty, in this mount of transfiguration. And it is farther remarkable, that the Lord of life and glory should again have chosen those three men to be with him in his agony in Gethsemane. (Matt. xxvi. 37.) Having prepared them by such a foreview of his glory in the mount; they of all men were best prepared to behold his humiliation in the garden. And the reader will profit in the view of both dispensations, if the Lord gives grace to a spiritual apprehension of the subject. I believe that the Lord's people, for the most part, will discover in their whole life of faith through the wilderness, (if they look deeper than the mere surface of things as they pass on,) that when at any time the Lord hath made more than an ordinary discovery of his love, he is thereby the better preparing them for what is to succeed in seasons of sorrow, or any other afflictions. That trial, be it of what kind it may, comes with less force which hath been preceded by remarkable out-pourings of the Spirit. And the child of God certainly feels more confidence, if called to a tribulated path, when, like Jacob and Israel of old, the Lord's voice is heard before the dispensation, saying, "Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee: for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." (Isa. xliii. 1—3.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses, and Elias talking with him.

"Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us here make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." (Matt. xvii. 3, 4.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

THERE is somewhat very striking in what is said of those men on this occasion. The Lord was pleased to bring from the invisible world those ancient servants of the Old Testament church, Moses and Elias, to be witnesses of this manifestation of his glory; as well as from the present world, Peter, James, and John, of the New; that as both were alike interested in the same event, and all will ultimately meet together when the whole comes to be consummated; they might behold, and be made everlastingly happy in the contemplation of the Divine glory. All these representatives of the church, (for such they were,) might thus be made the Lord's witnesses together *then*, as they will *hereafter;* and thus prove the church of our most glorious Christ to be one alike in Christ, according to the Lord's own statement: "My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her." (Song vi. 9.)

But how was it that Peter and his companions knew the persons of Moses and Elias? The former had been dead nearly fifteen hundred years, and the latter not less than nine. And yet it appears by the apostles calling them so familiarly by name, that they were well known to them. Probably the same gra-

cious Lord which indulged his servants with the vision, gave with it a suitable apprehension concerning it of all that was necessary to be known by them. The evangelist Luke, in his relation of this solemn scene, tells the church, not only that those Old Testament saints talked with the Lord Jesus, but also states what was the purport of their conversation. He saith, that "they appeared in glory, and spake of Christ's decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." (Luke ix. 31.) Whether the apostles apprehended the subject of those men's discourse, so as from thence to gather who they were; or whether it was the Lord the Holy Ghost, when causing this record to be made, guided the evangelist's pen to give the church the information, I venture not to speak. But it will not be a violence to this sweet Scripture, (for it is a very sweet one) if we pause over it; and looking up to the Almighty Teacher for his interpretation, humbly offer one or two observations upon it.

And *First*:—When we read, as in this Scripture, that those men, Moses and Elias, "appeared in glory," it may serve to teach us how the church will be adorned in all her members, with the glory of the Lord, when Jesus shall bring home his spouse, washed from all her sins in his own blood, and clothed in his righteousness.

And *Secondly*:—When, as in the instance of those men talking so familiarly with our Lord, we behold the blessed state into which, from union with Christ, his people are brought into communion with Christ, we gather this farther instruction; namely, how sure it is that in that upper and brighter world to which we are going, the whole body of the Lord's people will not only be brought into the open vision of the Lord, to see him as he is, and dwell with him for ever, but participate in all that belongs to Christ, as the Head

of his body the church, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Very blessedly hath the Lord Jesus expressed himself on this subject, when speaking to his Father, concerning his church, in those words: "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they all may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me; and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." (John xvii. 21.)

And *Thirdly*:—As a most interesting and highly momentous part of what is here said in this Scripture, of Moses and Elias talking with Jesus, "of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem;" let the reader not fail to observe from it, how the Old Testament saints, gone to glory, were looking with longing expectation to the death of Christ, whereby he himself had said by the prophet, "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day," (Zech. ii. 9.) I have often thought, and as often said it, when the subject hath risen again warm to my mind; what a sight must it have been "to the spirits of just men made perfect," when looking over the battlements of heaven, the redeemed in glory beheld the wonderful events of that day, when the Lord Jesus Christ "did away sin by the sacrifice of himself:" and by "that one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," (Heb. x. 10—14.) Surely, I have said, as I contemplated the wonders of the cross; Of all the beholders of that stupendous mystery, Christ crucified, those holy men of God, which lived and died under the Old Testament dispensation, must have gazed upon it with the greatest rapture. For let it be remembered, that the redeemed

gone to heaven by virtue of the infinite merits of Christ and his salvation, though in the council of peace between the persons in Jehovah, the sacrifice was appointed, and "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world:" (Rev. xiii. 8.) yet the price was not paid, until that day when Jesus on the cross said, "It is finished; and when he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." (John xix. 30.) Now then, redemption work was finished; and the glorified inhabitants of the church above beheld the wondrous consummation of it in the death of Christ, with holy joy and adoration. And let us not close the observation, without adding this one thought more to the subject; namely, that as the Son of God guaranteed before all worlds, in the "fulness of time," he would come to redeem his church from all iniquity; and by virtue of which, Old Testament saints which lived and died in the faith of Christ before this event took place, were received into glory; so now having accomplished it most fully and completely to every individual of Christ's mystical body in the church below; God hath equally guaranteed, by the blood of Christ's cross, to receive the whole to glory. (Zech. ix. 11. John xvii. 24.) Thus Old Testament saints, and New Testament believers, the *one* before the death of Christ, and the *other* after, are alike included in this great salvation; and all alike partake in the full blessedness of it; "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." (Isa. xlv. 25.)

We must not pass away from the view we have taken of those servants of the Lord, Moses and Elias, under the Old Testament dispensation; until that we have first connected with them what this Scripture states of the conduct of those servants of the Lord, Peter, and James, and John, under the New. We behold a very striking difference in the effect wrought on the minds of the former, from that

of the latter, in this glorious manifestation of our most glorious Christ. Moses and Elias spake familiarly to Christ, without the smallest apprehensions of fear. Whereas, it is said of the apostles, that "they were sore afraid." Luke's account is also, that "they were heavy with sleep;" as men overwhelmed and stupified with the splendour of what they saw. (Luke ix. 32.) Hence we learn the very great blessedness of the Lord's people, departed in the Lord, to the Lord's people who are yet in the body, though equally dear to the Lord. Moses and Elias had come forth from the invisible world, for the greater manifestation of the glory of Christ; and as the Lord's servants, to attend him on this occasion; but there was nothing new to them in beholding the person and glory of Christ. They were in the constant enjoyment of his presence, and brought into the knowledge of the mysteries of his kingdom; and as such, "spake of his decease," which was shortly to be accomplished at Jerusalem. And they had a full apprehension of the whole sense of that blessed Scripture which so puzzled the mind of Nicodemus, when the Lord said unto him, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." (John iii. 12, 13.)

And the reader, if he be spiritually taught, will I hope herefrom learn the advantages the church above on this account hath from the church below. True, both are equally safe, equally secure, equally beloved; and every individual of Christ's mystical body, whether with Christ in glory, or with Christ in grace, is where he should be. Nevertheless, until we drop the body, we are too much the subjects of sense and natural weakness, to have any apprehension

of the person of our most glorious Christ in the way and manner in which the disembodied spirits of "just men made perfect" behold the Lord of life and glory. All that we see and know, and enjoy by faith, in the present twilight of our being, is but as "through a glass darkly." And who among the redeemed and regenerated of the Lord's chosen ones, but in the view of the superiority in divine knowledge of Moses and Elias gone before, but must feel as the spouse, and join her love-song; "Make haste my beloved; and until the day break, and the shadows flee away, be thou like a roe upon the mountains of spices." (Song ii. 17; viii. 14.)

The proposal, made by Peter, becomes another testimony of the imperfect apprehension the apostle had, both of the Lord himself, and the object of this manifestation. "Lord!" said he, "it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not (as Luke adds) knowing what he said." No doubt he knew not what he said; but the apostle at that time had an idea somewhat of what he had read, of the booths made by the children of Israel at the feast of tabernacles. And connecting with it perhaps in his mind the manifestation of the Shechinah in those distant ages of the church, he made this proposal. But how little did he apprehend of the glorious person of Christ, in equalizing the Lord with his servants, and proposing alike a booth for all! Yea; how little did the man consider the blessedness of Moses and Elias, which had so many years been with the Lord in heaven; to talk of making, even for them, tabernacles upon earth!

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

"And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid." (Matt. xvii. 5, 6.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

We now approach in our spiritual contemplation of this sublime subject, to a most interesting part of it; and cannot but feel somewhat of the same holy awe and reverence as the apostles felt, when "the bright cloud overshadowed them;" for it is said, that "they feared as they entered the cloud," (Luke ix. 31.) And well may we do the same, in the relation of what followed; for, "behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." This proclamation came from God the Father himself. And this was the second time, since the incarnation of Christ, in which God the Father had borne public testimony to the person and character of our most glorious Lord. Once at this place, and once at his baptism; and in which all the persons in the GODHEAD took equal part; as if to define the distinction of the persons in the GODHEAD; while the unity of the Divine essence became equally proclaimed thereby. Indeed so decisive a testimony did the fathers of the church in the early days of the gospel consider this glorious Scripture to be, to the fundamental doctrine of our holy faith, that it was held forth by them upon every occasion. If any man need (said they) confirmation to the truth of the holy Three in One, which bear record in heaven; let him look at it at the river

Jordan, where the Son of God stood in substance of our flesh; the Holy Ghost was beheld "descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and at the same time, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. iii. 16, 17.) The church of God, during the Old Testament dispensation, was accustomed to the voice of the Lord speaking to his people. (Exod. xx. 22, 23.) And Moses was very earnest that the people should have a spiritual apprehension of it. "The Lord spake unto you," said he, "out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude, only ye heard a voice." (Deut. iv. 12.) We must not overlook to mention also that third public testimony God the Father gave to the person and character of our Lord Jesus Christ, on a subsequent occasion; I mean, when the Son of God in our nature called upon the Father to glorify his name. The answer is in correspondence to those similar testimonies: "Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." (John xii. 28.)

We must pause here, before we proceed farther, in order to enter into a spiritual and scriptural apprehension of the nature of that proclamation God the Father made to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

And *First*:—The Son of God is in the highest and fullest sense of the word his beloved Son, being in *essence* and *nature*, one with the Father and the Holy Ghost; alike partaking in all the properties and perfections of GODHEAD. For though distinguished by several special and peculiar acts of character which define person; yet altogether constituting unitedly one and the same Jehovah. (Deut. vi. 4.) Hence he is not only called the Son of God, but God's dear Son.

(Colos. i. 13.) His only begotten Son. (John. i 18.) And in the book of Proverbs, there are questions proposed on the subject, to shew the mysterious nature of the *being* and *essence* of God; and to prove that it is undefinable. "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" (Prov xxx. 4.) Our Lord himself hath answered these questions, for none else could answer, in his statement to Philip: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. I am in the Father, and the Father in me." (John xiv. 9, 11.) And elsewhere the Lord saith, "I and my Father are one." (John x. 30.) Now, this glorious person, the Son of God, his dear Son, his only begotten Son, in an ineffable way of union and oneness in *nature,* and *essence,* and *being;* by assuming into himself a portion of our nature, and thereby becoming God and man in one person; is the executor and administrator of all the great purposes, counsel, will, and pleasure of Jehovah, in his visibility to the church. Hence he is proclaimed under those glorious distinctions of character: "in whom," saith God the Father, "I am well pleased." And the church is commanded to hear Him. Having made proclamation of his person, and the pleasure of God in him; this necessarily follows, "Hear ye him."

Here are two or three very highly important considerations included in this testimony which God hath given to his dear Son; in the apprehension of which, we shall find some most blessed and delightful consequences which follow:

And *First:* God saith, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In which God the Father, not only makes known his relationship to

him, in whose bosom he had lain from all eternity; and of the infinite delight and complacency he hath everlastingly in him; but also all that are in him, and belonging to him. For the words are not, This is my beloved Son, *with* whom I am well pleased; which would have been so expressed, had it been intended exclusively personal to him, and to him only; but when it is said, *in whom*, all the persons of his people, his whole body the church, are included; the whole election of grace; for they are all alike "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

What a very sweet thought ariseth out of this view of the subject, for the everlasting joy and comfort of the church. Hence we have authority to conclude that all his church are beheld in him; they were originally and eternally chosen in him, before all worlds; and they are adopted in him, accepted in him, justified in him, sanctified in him, gifted with eternal life in him, with all grace in him, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him: and all "to the praise of the glory of his grace, who hath made us accepted in the beloved." I stay not to quote the numerous Scriptures in confirmation. But it will be well for the reader to refer to them for his own comfort and establishment in the faith. (Eph. i. 4—6. 1 John v. 10, 11. 2 Tim. i. 8.)

But we must not stop here: The voice which came out of the cloud and said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" said also, "hear ye him." How very gracious it was in our most gracious God and Father, when making such a revelation of the glory of his Son; and when bringing witnesses from both worlds to behold it: that he also should proclaim him under those endearing characters, and enjoining the church to *hear Him*. For in hearing him, we hear all the persons of the GODHEAD in him. As he said to Philip, so in effect he now saith to all

like Philip: "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the works." (John xiv. 10.) So that in hearing him, we hear the whole GODHEAD in him; and "our hearts are comforted, being knit together in love; and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. ii. 2, 3.)

Neither do we stop here. For what more particularly endears this revelation to our hearts, as made to us in the person of our most glorious Christ is the very precious consideration who he is that is the Revealer; and in what a nearness and dearness of relation the church of God stands to him. It is most blessed, most sweet, and most delightful, that when our most glorious Christ was pleased to give his church a glimpse of his glory in the mount of transfiguration, as a sample, as far as the church could then bear it, of the manner in which he would one day come in triumph to his kingdom, and be seen of all, and glorified in all; that he thus took two of his servants from the upper world, and three from this lower world, as the representatives of the church in both worlds, to be eye-witnesses of his Majesty. And that God our Father should also be pleased, at this very time, to make a renewed proclamation by a voice from heaven of his love to him, and the church in him; and command the church to receive all divine instructions from him; and thus call upon the most powerful affections of our hearts to regard him; in that He, that is so nearly allied to the Father, is so nearly allied to us; and while He is the beloved Son of God in his divine nature, He is our beloved Christ in his human nature. Here opens a subject of the most blessed and sublime kind: and at the

same time not more glorious in the consideration of its eternal excellency and duration than it is in its tenderness and affection, to awaken and keep our spiritual apprehensions alive to the daily, and hourly enjoyment of it during a whole life of grace, until grace brings the church to glory. And let me, before I pass on from the review of such matchless love in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, towards the church in Christ, as is here manifested, detain the reader to observe, that both *here* in the mount of transfiguration, and *hereafter* when the Lord Jesus Christ will come in more open glory, it is in his combined nature of God and Man, he will be seen and admired, and adored in all that believe in him. All communications now made in his kingdom of grace, and all that shall hereafter be made in his kingdom of glory, will be in him, and by him, and for him, and through him. For this was the very end and design in the Son of God assuming our nature, that through that nature all communications might flow to us in a channel like our own. So that as God, our blessings in him, and our holiness in him, is and must be everlasting; there can be no end; so as man, the union of his manhood with the GODHEAD, being for ever, ensures to us our mercies and blessings, and holiness and happiness for ever: flowing to us from him as our glorious Head to his members; and having life in him. This life is for ever, according to his own most gracious words: "Because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

"And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." (Matt. xvii. 7, 8.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

In the close of the preceding Scripture, we left the apostles in a state of great fear and perturbation. It is said that they had "fallen on their faces, and were sore afraid." Yes; all the manifestations of the Lord, while we are in a body of sin and death, are solemn and awful. The disciples were afraid at this manifestation of the glory of Christ, in the mount of transfiguration. The same disciples were as deeply drenched in sorrow in beholding the agony of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane. (Luke xxii. 45.) To what a state of degradation hath our fall in Adam reduced us! But what I would yet more particularly call upon the reader to remark with me from this subject is, how sweetly the Lord upon every occasion provides for the comfort of his people. Are they overwhelmed with the splendour of the glories of Christ in the mount? Jesus will touch them, and say "Be not afraid." Are they sleeping for sorrow in the garden of Gethsemane, at the unequalled agonies of Christ? Jesus will say, "Arise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." (Luke xxii. 46.) The Lord Jesus is attentive to all their states and circumstances, and hath a suited remedy for every occasion. Indeed the Holy Ghost hath drawn the lovely portrait of our most glorious Christ, in such sweet and affectionate characters as cannot but endear him to the hearts and affections of all his people. Not content with show-

ing how the Lord Jesus felt for all his people while on earth, he represents him in his solicitude for them now he is in heaven; and proves that though returned to glory, not an *iota* doth he less concern himself for his church which is yet on earth. He enters into all their exercises and all their cases; and in this sense is as much as ever, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The Holy Ghost thus speaks of him, and the church in him; "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16.)

But we must not stop here. What I would more particularly desire the reader to remark with me, (and the Lord, if it be his holy will, give him grace to enter into the spiritual and scriptural apprehension thereof,) is this; that this feeling of our most glorious Christ, by which he enters into a personal apprehension of, and participation with, what belongs to us; is to all intents and purposes the taking part with his church from a fellow feeling. Angels are not competent to this; indeed they know it not. For it is said that "verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." (Heb. ii. 16.) But it is the most delightful consideration to the church of the living God, that Jesus knows our feelings by his own. He tenderly sympathises with us in all our concerns, and in all that belongs to us. He is not only intimately acquainted but intimately concerned; and considers all that is done to us, as if done to himself: "Whoso toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." (Zech. ii. 8.)

Sweet and precious consideration to the church of God.

I beseech the reader not to overlook how this solemn scene in the mount of transfiguration was closed. When the Lord Jesus had touched the apostles, and when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. All was passed. Our highest enjoyments upon earth are but momentary. Nature cannot long sustain those bright and dazzling objects. All we now see, all we now behold, is but as through a glass darkly. In due time the church of God will be brought home to the fulness of glory; and we shall see Christ as he is, and dwell with him for ever. But in the mean time, every enjoyment, even our spiritual enjoyments, are but transient. One sweet thought however belongs even to the transciency of things below; namely, as the apostles, when they lifted up their eyes, saw none but Jesus; we learn that Jesus is always with us, and abideth for ever. Moses may depart, and Elias not be found; but our adorable Lord saith, "Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."

Let us not withdraw from the mount of transfiguration, where such manifestations of our most glorious Christ were once shown, without first gathering into one view some few of the more blessed love-tokens, which that lovely and all-loving Redeemer there made of himself to his servants. Neither let us for a moment forget that those men that were there, and to whom such grace was shown, were not so highly favoured for their own personal happiness only; but for the church, in every age and generation, of whom they were then the representatives. It may be said, indeed it must be said, as the Holy Ghost declared upon another occasion by his servant Peter, "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." (2 Pet. i. 20.) The Son of God most gra-

ciously intended it as a revelation of himself to his whole body the church, in order that it might be preserved in the minds of his people, a *sample* of the yet more full and open glory, in which he will finally appear; "when in the dispensation of the fulness of time, he will come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe."

And here the highest and most important object in this glorious scene which the church of God hath to contemplate, and unceasingly to contemplate night and day, until the church is finally brought home to behold the Lord Jesus in open face, is his own personal glory, which was the first and principal object intended from it. The glory of Christ's person is infinitely more transcendent than his glory as Head and Husband of his church and people. Hence he saith towards the close of his ministry, when speaking to the Father: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Here we behold him personally considered. And this is the most supreme point; yea, the very *acme* of glory next to the essential and invisible glory which he hath of GODHEAD, as one of the sacred Three, in common with the Father and the Holy Ghost. And this raiseth our conception up to the highest possible pitch we are capable of receiving of a glory infinitely surpassing all description:—Christ's personal glory, from the glory he hath independent of one act of mediation. The Lord calls it, the glory of "thine own self, O Father, the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Pause over the wonderful contemplation! Thus the Lord of life and glory is revealed as he is in himself; and "and in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily." (Col. ii. 9.)

It is very blessed to behold this our most glorious

Christ, as he is in himself, and in this divine character. For to bless him and adore him for what he is in himself, is infinitely higher than all the glory which he derives from his church and people. And for this plain reason: For had there been no church, nor any creatures, his glory, which he had in himself, would have been the same. The being glorified, as He expressed it to the Father: "Glorify thou me with thine own self;" riseth above all that the Lord derives from his kingdom of grace *here*, or glory *hereafter*.

When we have duly pondered the vast subject, let us pass on to the contemplation of Christ's glory, as manifested in the mount when the voice from heaven made proclamation of him in those divine characters, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

I have already in the former part of this little work, endeavoured to show the Scriptural sense, in which the church was hereby taught to receive Christ, and the Father's testimony of him. But in addition to what was then observed, I would now further beg the reader to contemplate our most glorious Christ, as Christ; thus becoming every thing that is blessed to his church and people. For the good pleasure here expressed to Christ, as the beloved Son, is that alone which gives value or excellency to the church. God in his Trinity of persons can behold no object with pleasure, but as it is beheld in Christ. Holy and without blame as the church was when chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; and beautiful and lovely as she now is, when recovered and brought back from the Adam-fall transgression; the whole and every part is in Christ. So the Lord Jesus speaks himself, by his servant the prophet to the church: "And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty; for it was perfect through

my comeliness which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God." (Ezek. xvi. 14.) The highest saint in glory is no more so than he is beheld in Christ. The whole church, in one aggregate of numbers, is but as so many cyphers without Christ. It is this Mighty One, at the head, gives both entity and importance to the whole church of God. So infinitely blessed and gracious was this voice from heaven of our most blessed God and Father to the person and character of our most glorious Christ, when he said; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

I detain the reader here, and take him by the hand, to withdraw with him for a moment from the contemplating our most glorious Christ under views so bright and dazzling, to retire into the inquiry both of his bosom, and my own; that as the church is so graciously accepted in Christ, as the beloved, what apprehension we have each for himself, of our being "accepted in the Beloved?" If the acceptation of the church is solely in Christ, and the whole body, and every individual of that body, are all as they are and were from all eternity, chosen in him, adopted in him, accepted in him, have grace in him; (2 Tim. i. 9.) and eternal life in him; (1 John v. 11.) then it will follow, that both our persons and our prayers; all communion and fellowship; a daily access to the throne, and boldness to enter into the holiest *now* by faith, and into heaven itself *hereafter* in glory, can only be as we are in Him. The great and momentous question therefore is; as God beholds the church in Christ, and is well pleased in the view, and proclaims his perfect approbation of the same; are we well pleased in beholding Christ as God beholds him; and find a perfect confidence in him for acceptance in a full assurance of faith, in that he who is God's beloved, is our beloved; and he with whom God is well

pleased, we are well pleased? If so, our most glorious Christ is not only in our view the "altogether lovely and the chiefest among ten thousand;" but we behold him in his divine character as God and man Mediator; the visible Jehovah; the Executor and Administrator of all the purposes, designs, councils; yea, and the thoughts of God, in all the departments of nature, providence, grace and glory. As such we know him in his gracious administration to us. We contemplate him in all his relative manifestations, what he is in himself, in his greatness, and fulness, and completeness, and suitability to our persons, as we are in him; what he hath done for us; what he is for ever doing for us; and what he will do for us to all eternity. We feel moreover a pleasure of an inexpressibly sweet and endearing kind, from the relation in which we stand to him. For while he is the beloved Son of God, he fills up all that is near and dear to us in every connection of the charities of life. He is our Head and Husband; our Redeemer, Brother, Friend; yea, if possible, yet more personal; "for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Eph. v. 30.) If the Lord Jesus Christ be all this and more in our view; then have we a well-grounded assurance and a good hope through grace, that when he shall come in all his glory to make a renewed manifestation of himself in still brighter displays of majesty than in the mount of transfiguration; "we shall have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." (1 John ii. 28.) And the exultation of our souls will be in words like the prophet: "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation." (Isa. xxv. 9.) But while we look forward with those delightful hopes from a spiritual knowledge of Christ, and an assured interest in Christ; what a sad prospect

doth the present day of a Christ despising generation manifest all around! Surely, the horizon of what is called the church, never lowered with a more gloomy aspect! What multitudes are there who live as "without God, and without Christ in the world!" Into what house or family can we direct our search for the discovery of the true followers of our most glorious Christ? But I turn from the cheerless contemplation. It may serve however for use both to the writer and reader, if the Lord by his grace so favour the prospect of the evil beheld in the present day around, as to induce the closer scrutiny into our own hearts. And as the Lord saith, that at such times, "he will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees;" (Zeph. i. 12.) we should do well to look into our most secret chambers; and as we walk through ourselves, pause at every corner, that nothing may secrete itself under the "form of godliness." And conscious that the Lord *alone* is competent to the discovery, I would for myself, say in the words of the Lord in Scripture: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.)

I cannot forbear recalling to the reader's attention, (what I only just glanced at before in the history,) the very interesting view this scene of our Lord's transfiguration had upon the mind of the apostle Peter. Nothing can afford a higher attestation of the importance of the thing itself, than that the Holy Ghost, at the close of Peter's ministry, should warm his soul with the recollection of it; and cause him to leave behind him for the perpetual consolation of the church in all ages, his dying sentiments on the subject. The manner in which he introduced it is particularly striking; and the cause which he had in view in relating it to the church, both shew for what intent

God the Holy Ghost was pleased to direct the apostle's pen to commit it into the Scripture record. "Knowing (said he) that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover, I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance." And then we are very blessedly shewn the view Peter himself had of the gracious condescension of our most glorious Christ, in the transfiguration of himself in the mount; and the Lord's intention that all his church should be acquainted with it: "For we have not (said he) followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." (2 Pet. i. 16—18.)

Let the reader be told that a period of more than thirty years had passed between the scene of glory and the apostle's now rehearsing the particulars of it with such delight and joy. Let the reader farther observe the sense the apostle had in his own soul of the infinite glories of Christ's person; and the infinite interest which the Lord's people have both in his person and in his salvation. Here are no "cunningly devised fables," no arts, no contrivances to amuse men with shadowy representations. Here was the open display of Christ's glory; and we that were with him in the holy mount were eye-witnesses of his majesty. Oh! the blessedness of the thing itself! The infinite condescension of our most gracious Christ; and his infinite goodness in causing such records to be made of his glory.

And let the reader not overlook one sweet part in

this great volume of grace and mercy, I mean the apostle's own personal enjoyment of it. For, beside the overwhelming testimony the whole body of the church derive from it, we must, to do justice to the divine goodness, mark also the Lord's special favour to Peter. The Lord would have Peter before his death brought back to the recollection of it in full streams of refreshment. The scene shall be as lively in his memory as if no time had intervened. The Lord caused it to be as a flood tide in his mind; and caused it to rise above all the high-water marks of all other ebbings or flowings in the man's memory. And such "bringings to remembrance," (as some of the Psalms in their titles render it,) were not unfrequent in the lives of holy men of old, when dying. Jacob had the remembrance of his Bethel manifestation when dying, though so many years had fled from the one time to the other. (Gen. xlviii. 3.) And Moses, when blessing Israel, could not forget to mention the good will of the Lord to him in the bush. (Deut. xxxii. 16.) And let the reader stand assured that the instances in later ages, yea, and even to the present hour, are not uncommon in the church of our most glorious Christ. However time may have worn furrows upon the memory in other things, in those past manifestations of the Lord to his people, the tablet appears brightened up upon many occasions as though the engraving had been just made; and especially in dying moments, neither the cold clammy sweat of the face, nor the pale quivering state of the lips, can prevent the saint of God from rejoicing in the recollection of past manifestations, and the sure expectation of and rejoicing in hope.

I only add a prayer, that the glorious Person whose grace was so great upon this occasion in the mount, may grant to all his people to be *heart*-witnesses of his presence here, till we come to be *eye*-witnesses of his Majesty in heaven. Amen.

# THE LORD HEALING THE MAN AMONG THE TOMBS,

## IN THE COUNTRY OF THE GADARENES.

### HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

"And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him, out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit,

"Who had his dwelling among the tombs, and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

"Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

"And always night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones." (Mark v. 1—5.)

### NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

Our most glorious Lord Jesus Christ had been discoursing with his usual condescension in parables in the audience of a great multitude; and having now finished his sermon, he came as the evangelist here relates, over to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. Matthew, in his relation of this history, calls it, "the country of the Gergesenes." (Matt. viii. 28.) But Luke in his ac-

count of it, useth the same name as Mark. (Luke viii. 26.) It is plain however, that one and the same place is intended by all; because the other side of the sea was Galilee; from whence Christ and his disciples had embarked. It could therefore be no other. Gadara and Gergesa, were evidently one and the same city; though perhaps, as is not unfrequently the case, even to the present hour, two places originally distinct, yet from being near each other, and at length by increase of buildings meeting each other, became incorporated in one. Hence they retained the original name of each; and some called it the country of the Gergasenes, and some the country of the Gadarenes. The most ancient however was that of the Gergasenes; being the same as in the days of Abraham was called the Girgashites: (Gen. xv. 21.) and so on to the days of Moses and Joshua. (Deut. vii. 1. Joshua iii. 10.)

As soon as the Lord Jesus had landed, an opportunity was afforded for the display of his Almighty power! The Scripture saith, that "immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit." Here at once opens to our view a renewed testimony both of the person and GODHEAD of Christ; and of the gracious purpose for which he came down from heaven. In order therefore to enter into the scriptural and spiritual apprehension of this interesting subject; I pray the reader not to overlook that this country of the Gergashites, or if you will, the Gadarenes, or Gergasenes, was not only an heathenish country, but one of those very countries whom the Lord promised his people to drive out the inhabitants before them. See (Deut. vii. 22, 23.) But even here, as in the instance at Jericho, the cursed city, the Lord had a Rahab of his family to gather from it in the early ages of the church; as he had a Zaccheus, in the latter days of the gospel; and this

man also, whose history is before us, for the gathering of whom it is evident the Lord passed over from Galilee to Gadara. Oh! what a world of mysteries is the church of God surrounded with in all generations! Very blessedly as well as beautifully was it said by the Lord himself, in relation to this grace-gathering method of our most glorious Lord: "For thus saith the Lord God; Behold I, even I will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country." (Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 12, 13.)

And what can be a higher proof of the gracious purpose for which the Son of God came down from heaven, than by this sovereign act he wrought, (as the sequel of this history sheweth,) in rescuing one of his, from the dominion of sin and Satan, and conquering the unclean spirit, in the very citadel of this poor man's heart, where the great enemy of souls was reigning with such despotic sway! This was among the vast designs in the work of redemption. The Lord of life and glory not only undertook to bring back all his chosen ones whom the Father had given to him, and restore perfect order among all the works of God; but he engaged to root out of his kingdom all things that offend. For this purpose, saith the Holy Ghost by John, "the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil." Yea saith the Holy Ghost, by another of his servants, Paul: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers

of flesh and blood, he also himself partook of the same; that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through the fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage." (Heb. ii. 14, 15.) And blessedly God the Father bore testimony to the Almighty victories of his Son, ages before his incarnation, by his servant the prophet Isaiah: "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh, and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer; the Mighty One of Jacob." (Isa. xlix. 24, 25, 26.)

But we must not stop here: as we prosecute the interesting history of this poor man under demoniac influence, and the Lord's perfect cure of him, we behold the highest illustrations of the eternal power and GODHEAD of our most glorious Christ; and no less the infinite love and grace of his heart towards his redeemed, and the assured triumph thereby shewn of his final victory over all the enemies of our salvation.

Let us first behold the very affecting circumstances of this poor man as he was in himself, when the Lord Jesus met him. It is said that "he had an unclean spirit; his dwelling was among the tombs; and night and day he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones." So much was he under the influence of the great enemy of souls, that "neither fetters nor chains could bind him." And so terrible was he to all the country

around, that "no man might pass by that way." Matthew, in his relation of this history, speaks of *two;* and no doubt his account is correct, that there were two poor creatures labouring under the same dreadful malady; but Matthew doth not relate any thing of the miracle the Lord Jesus wrought on this occasion. Mark and Luke are both particular in the cure of *one;* what became of the *other* is not said. And as the Holy Ghost is silent concerning him, it becomes us to do the same.

It is a sad page in this man's history, if it were only in reference to the body, to behold to what a state our whole nature is rendered liable from the effects of sin! For let it be remembered, and indeed humiliating as the thought is, it should never cease to be remembered, that as our whole nature in the Adam-fall transgression is alike the subject of inherint sin; so are we all equally subject to the like effects of sin. Every disease and sorrow is equally the inheritance of all. And indeed in the one final termination of all, namely, death; every son and daughter of Adam manifest their equal birth-right; "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.) Contemplate it in this point of view, and what a subject is opened to the mind of every awakened and regenerated child of God; the recollection of all the head-aches, and heart-aches, going on every day, and all the day in human life. Indeed the whole world is but one great hospital. And if the writer of this in the moment of writing, or the reader of this in the moment of reading, are both exempt, it is not *merit,* but *mercy;* not *nature,* but *grace,* which makes the difference from the multitude, racking under the various maladies all around. And whose heart can but melt in the consciousness of such things, when freed by Divine favour, from all bodily and mental evil!

But when from the diseases of the body, to which by sin all men are heirs, and which the representation of this poor man's case among the tombs, raiseth up subject for meditation; we behold him in the calamitous situation here set forth, in relation to the soul, the former misery is but as a *shadow* to the *substance.* All the pains and sicknesses; all the sorrows and miseries of the body, and to which by sin we are exposed, are bounded within a narrow compass; and if considered as unconnected with another life, must of themselves soon cease, when that Scripture comes to be fulfilled: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Gen. iii. 19.) But we dare not disconnect the life that now is, neither its intimate consequences with that which is to come. And therefore when we add to the sufferings of the body, the sorrows of the *soul;* and in every instance where the uncontrolled dominion of sin and Satan *here,* is followed by the everlasting dominion *hereafter:* to what a magnitude doth the whole subject arise to our view! And how infinitely interesting then must be this miracle of our most glorious Lord, in relation to this poor man among the tombs; which shews in him and his great salvation an infallible remedy, and the only remedy for sinners, possessed like him of an unclean spirit.

For our better apprehension of the subject, I will beg to gather the several features of this man's case, as they are represented by the evangelist; and as we pass on in the review of them, let us pray for divine teaching, to discover the high interest in which it concerns ourselves; hoping that such improvement may arise therefrom under the Lord's blessing, as may be blessed to him that writes, and to him that reads: and in the instance of both, the Lord may thereby be glorified.

And first, let us observe the cause of this man's

misery. It is said that he had an unclean spirit. Alas! though the being possessed of an unclean spirit doth not manifest itself alike in all, yet every man by nature, and while unrenewed by grace, is in the same state of subjection to sin and Satan. And not only are we all alike by nature under the dominion of one unclean spirit, but many. The apostle Paul, in his epistle to Titus, states the subject particularly, when he said: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." (Titus iii. 3.) No gally slave, chained to the oar, is more in captivity than are all unrenewed, unregenate men, to the several domineering powers which reign in them. We are in bondage to sin and Satan, with all the dreadful consequences. "The lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," all govern with despotic sway. And as we are all justly subject to the decrees of the divine laws which we have all broken; so the justice of God alarms whenever the recollection crosses the mind; and the fear of death and eternity, added to the stings of conscience, renders the state of every man by nature, truly a state of bondage.

*Secondly:*—The case of every sinner in this state is not unsimilar to the man here described with an unclean spirit. For as he is said to have had his dwelling among the tombs; night and day crying, and cutting himself with stones; so may the sinner truly be said to dwell among the dead; while he himself is dead in trespasses and sins. And no less doth he, in the fullest sense of the words, cry and cut himself; when in wounding his conscience continually with fresh guilt, already too much laden and harassed with galling accusations, and the self reproaches of his own mind, and the dread of impending punishment.

And were it not for the Lord's restraints upon his people, of which at the time they are wholly unconscious, what havoc would even the redeemed ones of the Lord's heritage make of themselves in numberless instances, while remaining in the unrenewed state of their fallen nature, and living in darkness and the shadow of death! Many a child of God hath found occasion in the after stages of life when the Lord hath called them by grace, to look back, and with melting hearts contemplate all the way the Lord brought them through the wilderness, preserving them and keeping them amidst all the wayward and perverse inclinations of their own hearts. All such can and do, like men escaped from shipwreck, when having gained the summit of the rock joining the main land, looking over the precipice below, behold to whom the whole salvation is to be ascribed, and spiritually enjoy those precious Scriptures: Psalm ciii. Jude i. Isaiah li. 1, 2. Psalm cvii.

And *Thirdly*, to mention no more: As this man all the while he was under the influence of the unclean spirit, was not only living among the dead, and doing injury to himself, but had been a terror to others, so that no chains could bind him, nor any, with safety to themselves, come near him; so the sinner of every description and character is in every act unholy; dead to all the true purposes of life: injuring himself, injuring others, as far as his influence extends: under no law of God to bind him, nor of man to restrain him; for both the commands of the one, and the persuasions of the other are lost to him: and unless recovered by sovereign grace, as he lives, so he dies, a stranger to God, and to all the sweet mercies and blessings of God in Christ: a stranger to the person of Christ; to the salvation in Christ; to all the glorious truths in the gospel of Christ; yea, a stranger to himself and to the way of peace, which he

hath never known; neither with respect to the saving work of grace upon his heart, hath he ever so much as heard, "whether there be any Holy Ghost!"

I pause to observe the terror of a state like this! Let the outward circumstances of life be what they may, it is the inward that is wretched; and houses painted with vermillion, or couches of the softest down for the body, can minister no relief to minds so diseased. The prophet hath pourtrayed this superlative state of misery, under imagery so striking, and at the same time so awful, as awakens in the view the most alarming apprehensions for all such characters: "The wicked," saith the prophet, "are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." And then he finisheth the portrait in those tremendons words: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." (Isa. lvii. 20, 21.) And is it not to such causes must be ascribed the many events we hear or hear read of; when men impelled by the temptations of Satan, and hurried away by their own guilty consciences, rush into eternity, and in self-destruction, at which nature recoils, seek relief from a burden they can no longer bear? Nature sickens at the contemplation! Indeed, it is too awful to dwell upon.

Let the children of God learn, herefrom, to make a right estimate of all their mercies. The choicest blessings which the Lord puts in the lot of his people, are spiritual. "It is not," (as Moses when dying told Israel,) "for the precious things brought forth by the sun, nor the precious things put forth by the moon: but the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush." (Deut. xxxiii. 14, 16.) The greatest part of them who have this good will of the Lord Jesus, know but little of the good things of the earth. Having food and raiment, they learn therewith to be content. They have Christ in their portion, be it little or much; and that

sweetens and sanctifies all. Hence the prophet in the midst of dearth, sang his love-song to the Lord; and in him found a fulness to make up the want of all creature emptiness: "Although," said he, "the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat: the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Hab. iii. 17, 18.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him.

"And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

"For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit." (Mark v. 6—8.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It is a subject of infinite importance to pause here, and ask what it was that wrought this sudden change on this poor creature? It could not be any thing of an outward appearance in our most gracious Lord. For to every eye of mere natural observation there was nothing in Christ, either to attract his attention, or to beget this regard. What was said by the prophet ages before concerning Christ, holds good in all generations: "When we see him there is no beauty in him that we should desire him." (Isa. liii. 2.) There was nothing in the apparel of Christ, or the disciples of Christ, which accompanied him, which could operate to any effect upon this poor man's mind.

For Christ appeared only in the dress of a poor Jew; and was accompanied by the poorest of the people. And yet this man, whom no fetters could bind, nor reasoning tame, on the first sight of the Lord Jesus Christ, ran towards him, and worshipped him. And who doth not, in this man's instance, behold the sovereign work of grace on the soul? And indeed this is in itself, if there were no other, a decided testimony to the truth of Scripture on this great point; which in numberless passages declare the gracious union there is between Christ as the glorious Head, and his body the church, which no sin of this time-state in the Adam-fall transgression could dissolve; neither all that inherent guilt and sinfulness of our nature do away. The union still holds. God the Father chose the church in Christ, and gave the church to Christ, before all worlds. And God the Son betrothed the church to himself from everlasting; and by virtue of which he redeemed her during her time-state upon earth, by the sacrifice of himself. And God the Holy Ghost manifested his love no less to the church, in the unction of his Almighty power, with her glorious Head; and engaged in covenant-engagements to regenerate her in every individual of Christ's mystical body, from the death of sin to a life of righteousness in Christ.

And though the subject itself is too deep and hidden in a thousand and ten thousand instances, to develope and explain; yet there can be no doubt but that prior to the gracious work of conversion, the Lord Jesus doth make numberless communications of himself, in preventing, restraining, and upholding grace; of which the highly-favoured objects themselves, are at the time wholly unconscious. This is evident from the Lord's own words; he saith, that when from everlasting, he was set up as the glorious chosen Head and Husband of his church, that "then

his delights were with the sons of men." (Prov. viii. 31.) And the spouse in the songs, echoes to this glorious truth, when she saith: "I am my Beloved's, and his desire is towards me." (Song vii. 10.) So that from one eternity to another, Christ hath his eye upon his church, and the tendencies of his love are going forth in unceasing desires towards her. Yea, the Lord Jesus hath his love song no less, when beholding her, he saith: "Sing ye to her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." (Isa. xxvii. 2, 3.) So that it is no violence to Scripture, but rather in the most perfect harmony with the general analogy of Scripture, to say: that the Lord Jesus never intermits his attention to his church from everlasting to everlasting. His eyes are always upon her. He beholds her in every state and condition. "He waits," as the prophet saith, "to be gracious;" waits the hour appointed for the bringing to himself in the open manifestation of his love, every member of his mystical body. "There is a set time to favour Zion." As it was by himself, when he came to redeem his church, in what is called, "the fulness of time;" so is it in every individual instance of his people, when the Holy Ghost is given to them, because they are children; and when by this Divine manifestation of Christ in their hearts, "they cry, Abba, Father: the Spirit witnessing to their spirits, that they are the children of God." (Gal. iv. 4—6.)

And would the limits of this little work admit of enlarging upon the subject, I might yet farther show, and from the same divine authority, that from this everlasting union the church hath with Christ, and her oneness in Christ, there is a spiritual apprehension of the person of Christ, and the drawing of the soul to Christ, when the hour of conversion is come; by which the child of God in regeneration, is instinc-

tively led to Christ with desires of salvation. Hence the Father declares, that this is the testimony of his love to the church, in this sovereign act of mercy: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. xxxi. 3.) Hence the Son of God in confirmation of the same, saith: "All that the Father hath given me shall come to me; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John vi. 37—40.) And hence the Holy Ghost is said to make the *bodies* of the Lord's people his *temple;* when by regeneration, he hath "brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and hath burst their bonds asunder." (1 Cor. vi. 19.) Hence this poor man, from among the Gadarenes, when the Lord had uttered that sovereign command: "Come out of the man thou unclean spirit," felt the mighty change, and the moment "he saw Jesus, ran and worshipped him." He was at once taught who Jesus was; and his heart was drawn to him by divine drawing. Similar to what the Lord said to Deborah in the opposite scale, in drawing Barak into her hands: "I will draw" saith the Lord unto thee, to the river Kishon, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand." (Judges iv. 7.) So the Lord, in whose hand are all hearts, as the "rivers of the water, he turneth them withersoever he will." (Prov. xxi. 1.)

It will be a very sweet improvement of this part of the history, if the reader hath found similar effects of the Lord's drawing in his own experience. As the Holy Ghost saith by John, in relation to the Lord's grace to his people; "If we love him, it is because he first loved us;" (1 John iv. 19.) so in our affection for Christ, or coming to Christ; all is because he hath first manifested his affection, and hath come to us. "Draw me," said the church, "we

will run after thee." (Song i. 4.) The prophet taught by the Lord, did but cast the mantle upon Elisha; and he arose and followed him. (2 Kings xix. 19.) And the Lord God of the prophets did but pass by, when like an infant, the church was cast out to perish; and bid her live, and life and health followed. (Ezek. xvi. 6.) The poor man in the desperate state of being possessed with an "unclean spirit," was equally passive and incompetent to any recovery in his own strength. The highest saint on earth is no more than simply a receiver of the manifold gifts of God. "Of his fulness do we all receive, and grace for grace." (John i. 16.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion, for we are many.

"And he besought him much, that he would not send them away out of the country.

"Now there was there nigh unto the mountains, a great herd of swine feeding.

"And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

"And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, they were about two thousand; and were choked in the sea." (Mark v. 9—13.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It might perhaps be gratifying to some readers, if I were to enter into the several particulars here related, and enlarge upon them with remarks. But this would be more curious than profitable. Let it suf-

fice to observe, that such things as are commensurate to our apprehension in this transaction, and were evidently our gracious Lord's intentions therein, are very plain and obvious. These may be traced in the order in which they stand. The question which Christ put to the man possessed of the unclean spirit: "What is thy name? And he answered, Legion, for we are many;" hath much signification in it. A legion of the smallest kind among the Romans consisted of six thousand; and not unfrequently double that number. By this view therefore of the number and power of the great enemy of souls, and the Son of God's authority over them in his sovereignty of dispossessing them, was meant to teach his people this great and leading truth; that no power shall prevail against them; and nothing, (as the Lord elsewhere said upon another occasion) "shall by any means hurt them." (See Luke x. 17—20.) The next improvement this passage furnisheth, becomes another very blessed testimony of the GODHEAD of Christ; in the petition put forth by the unclean spirits, that if the Lord Jesus cast them from the man, he would suffer them to enter into the herd of swine. Here was at once a proof that the devils knew Christ, and acknowledged his Almighty power. And yet how many are there who call themselves Christians, after Christ; and yet by a strange misnomer, own him not as God. The Holy Ghost by his servant the prophet Isaiah, hath explained it. (Isaiah vi. 8—10.) And how striking is it to behold in this Scripture, short as it is, not only the acknowledgement of devils to the GODHEAD of Christ, but the exercise of that divine power over both devils, men and beasts! (Col. i. 16, 17.) And it is not the smallest improvement to be made of this Scripture, in the actual exercise of that power which the Lord of life and glory used, in permitting the entrance of the unclean spirits

into the herd of swine; that thereby these Gadarenes who were themselves heathens, and worshipped devils, were taught the folly as well as sin of their idolatry. What effect followed in their minds after the Lord's departure is not said: but nothing could have been more highly calculated to shew the vast ignorance of the human mind in worshipping evil spirits, than by such a display of their nothingness before our God, in their destruction.

I must not dismiss the consideration of this Scripture before that I have desired the reader, "if so be he hath tasted that the Lord is gracious," to take a spiritual view of the whole passage in this comprehensive point, for his own spiritual enjoyment of it. The possession of those unclean spirits, is wholly with an eye to the prevention of *spiritual* blessings to the people of God. There is nothing at which Satan, "the prince of the power of the air, (as he is called) the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," revolts; nothing he begrudges the Lord's people; but *spiritual* things. He will make no opposition to ought beside. He rageth as this Scripture hath stated it, in the instance of this poor man, in the hearts of numbers, as an *unclean spirit*. For when men live in the open profession of uncleanness, drunkenness, sensuality, and the like; they may be said to have an *unclean spirit*. But not unfrequently, as the different periods of age advance, the man or youth of uncleanness in the early parts of life is marked in conduct with the pursuit of somewhat different as he goes on; but still unless a saving change from the Lord, as in the case of this poor man, passeth upon him, he is still under the dominion and power of the same evil spirit. Our Lord hath himself described it in his striking manner in that Scripture; when he saith, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh

through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." (Matt. xii. 43—45.) Here is plainly described a change wrought, but not a *spiritual.* The unclean spirit is gone out an unclean devil, but is come back a devil still; only under a different appearance of character. An outward reform hath taken place, through the shame of man, or the dread of God; the stings of his own conscience alarming him, the apprehension of death, and the fear of eternity, he is become more decent in life, more sober; and to those who only look on, and judge by outward appearance, he is considered a very good sort of character. But if there be no regeneration of heart; no sovereign work of grace; no *driving out,* by the command of our God, as in the instance of this man the devil was by Christ; the great enemy of souls is only gone out of his own accord; and as this Scripture of Christ states, soon after returns. The man's heart is still as much as ever in Satan's possession; and though he goes out an unclean devil, he comes in apparently a little cleaner, but a devil still; for he calls it "his own house." And now it is "swept and garnished." And the Lord Jesus, who knoweth the heart and searcheth the reins, declares that he returns "with seven other spirits more wicked than himself; so that the last state of that man is worse than the first." And so it is most evidently. For if while under the same influence, and living still an unrenewed, unregenerate heart, the man now hath put off

the temptations of the unclean spirit, and hath put on the appearance of cleanness; covering over with the *outsides* of religion, the dissimulation of corruption that is *within;* is apparently alive to all the trammels of worship; and "yet dead in trespasses and sins," having never been awakened by the Lord: these are what the Lord calls, the "seven other spirits more wicked than himself," because more desperately deceiving, and being deceived, both himself and the world; and living and dying in this state, the latter end of such an one is worse than the beginning. And who shall say the numbers that are daily thus mocking God and the world by such duplicity! Who shall tell them, as they pass, in this moving up and down in life; in thus whitening the sepulchre; while rottenness and dead mens' bones are within, what false glare is without?

See to it reader, that your walk of life is not of this awful kind; the more awful because the more specious. Satan never more artfully deceiveth, than when transformed into an angel of light. (2 Cor. xi. 14.) Nothing short of the arm of God can deliver, (as in the case of this character before us) from the influence of Satan. Hell is up in arms to keep the poor sinner in his vassalage. And no gift but what is *spiritual* doth the devil wish to keep from you. The Lord therefore grant, that nothing short of what is *spiritual* may satisfy either writer or reader. Very blessedly the Holy Ghost thus teacheth: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour

of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Eph.vi. 10—13.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

"And they that saw it, told them how it befel to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine." (Mark v. 15, 16.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

We enter here upon the blessed fruits and effects of our Lord's miracle; and step by step find somewhat to raise the mind, under divine teaching, to a state of delight and joy, both in the contemplation of the Lord of life and glory, in the exercise of this great act of grace, and the blessedness of all his redeemed ones, who, when like this man, from the sovereignty of it, are "brought from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to the living God." Every portion within the compass of those two verses is most precious. I would therefore beg the reader to attend to them in due order.

The *first* observation which meets us in the relation, is the effect wrought upon the inhabitants of the city and country around. So wonderful an event excited universal attention. Luke, in his account of it, saith, that "the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes came out to see what had happened." And indeed we may well conceive what effect the very relation of it must have had upon every one that heard it, when only receiving the report from others. But what must it have been to those who were eye-wit-

nesses of the miracle themselves! That a man under possession of demoniac influence, whom no chains nor fetters could bind, who was night and day in the mountains, and in the tombs; crying, and cutting himself with stones, and the fear and terror of the whole country, should instantly, at the first sight of Jesus, be restored to his right mind; and that he should have instantly run to Christ, and falling down before him, worshipped him! And the event was rendered still more marvellous to the beholders who were present at the scene, and who, (as the Scripture hath stated,) informed those that came out to see what it was that was done, that not only was the legion of the evil spirits dispossessed by a word speaking of Christ from the man, but by the Lord's authority they had entered into the swine, who all had instantly run down a steep place into the sea, and had perished in the waters!

There is nothing which arrests the mind of carnal men more, than when they are called upon to behold the works of grace on the hearts of such as were carnal like themselves; and especially when the Lord singles out one from a company of the ungodly to display on him the sovereignty of his Almighty love. They look amazed, and are astonished at what is wrought; not having any conception in themselves of the divine operations: "They think it strange (saith Peter,) that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." (1 Pet. iv. 4.) They gaze with astonishment, wondering how it is, that any should forego the pleasures of sense and appetite, to follow what they conceive to be a life of privation and melancholy. The Holy Ghost hath drawn a representation of this in a very beautiful manner in one of the psalms when delivering his church out of the hand of oppression. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then

was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." (Psalm cxxvi. 1—3.) And when the child of God *can* and *doth* realize this deliverance from the captivity of Satan, in his own spiritual state and circumstances; the event is so marvellous, that it appears more like a dream than a reality; until, overwhelmed with the gracious act of a most gracious God, he saith to every looker-on, who expresseth thanks at what he hath done for him, and in which he is joined by all the regenerated like himself, "Yea, the Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

But *secondly,* for we must not stop here, in our contemplation of those Gadarenes that came out to see what it was that was done: We are told that when they had seen the mighty change wrought upon the man; the state of mildness in which he now appeared, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind, "they were afraid." We do not hear a word of murmur at the destruction of the swine; nor of their complaining that the keepers of them had fled away on the loss of the swine; but all was fear and dismay. But what was their fear? They had no longer any fear of future violence from the man which had been heretofore their dread; for they had beheld the perfect composure in which he now sat at the feet of Jesus; but their fear arose from other causes. They dreaded Christ, lest he who by a word had dispossessed a legion of *unclean spirits* from the man; and suffered them to go into the herd of swine; should manifest an act of sovereign power on them also. And, as guilt breeds fear; and the consciousness they had of guilt, made them apprehensive the time of judgment was come; all that guilt, the claims of conscience, the fear of death, and what similar pas-

sions could induce in the carnal mind; they felt all this, and which expressed itself in fear.

The reader will do well not to pass away from a subject so highly interesting, without taking with him the very solemn view it opens of our inherent depravity, and the atheism of every man's heart by nature. Here was displayed an act of the greatest mercy to a poor man, enough in itself, to have wrought joy in every beholder; and to have excited desire in every one that beheld it to partake of the like mercy. And such would be the immediate effect on all, if there were not some latent deadly evil lurking within to prevent it. And this proves that nothing short of the same Almighty power, that was competent to cast out the legion of *unclean spirits* from the poor man; can be competent to work the work of grace upon any, and every man's heart. The dreadful fear, the bondage fear, which these men felt, is alike in all men by nature; and all are equally averse to Christ, until the power of Christ hath passed upon their hearts.

*Thirdly* · Let us leave such characters for awhile, to consider how many precious instructions open to our view, in the contemplation of this poor man. He, who while under the possession of the *evil spirit*, was raging under the full control of every ungovernable passion, was now sitting at the feet of Jesus, tranquil and calm. We behold him now totally changed from his former desolate state, in which he wore no clothes; for he was now clothed, and had on his garments. And from a derangement in which he knew not what mischief he did to others, and was regardless of what he did to himself; he was now brought into a perfect enjoyment of his senses, and in his right mind. And who that reads this relation, but will be prompted to exclaim: "What hath God wrought!" And when we take into the account the sprituality of the subject; and consider the whole of

what is here set forth, as an emblem of still infinitely higher work, than hath relation only to the present life; how is the miracle heightened to our contemplation; and what a lovely representation doth it carry with it of the love, grace, and mercy, of our most gracious God! It is the sinner which is here depictured, possessed indeed while in the unrenewed state of nature, with, not one unclean spirit, but with a *legion*. "The god of this world," (as by a figure of speech he is called,) "hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God should shine unto them." (2 Cor. iv. 4.) For look at this man; yea, look at every man as he is by nature, in the original state of the Adam-fall transgression: and what is he, but the complete subject and slave of Satan! To such a desperate state is he reduced by reason of the delinquency of essential inherent sin, that both in body and mind, he is capable of being carried away to the most awful degree of madness, and every evil. And although this disease of sin doth not appear in all alike, no more than disorders of the body, which all bring death, are all the same; yet all are equally liable to the effects; and but for restraining grace, would deluge the whole human nature with the overwhelming destruction, as the waters did the earth at the flood. When we behold therefore any of the fallen race of Adam, as this demoniac, dispossessed of the raging power of the enemy, and brought to the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind; we behold the infinite sovereignty and preciousness of that salvation, and the Almightiness of the all precious Saviour, who, as the prophet describes him, is the "Raiser up of the foundations of many generations; the Repairer of the breach; the Restorer of the paths to dwell in." (Isaiah lviii. 12.) Neither can the imagination figure to itself a

sight more lovely, than when like this man, we behold *now* in the many instances going on around; (for the Lord hath not even in the present awful day, left himself without witness to such acts of grace in the earth,) a sinner awakened to such a sense of sin, and delivered by the mighty power of God from the chains and fetters of a state of sinful nature, is brought to the contemplation and love of the Lord Jesus Christ, and sits down at the feet of Jesus; to be taught of him; and to "hear the gracious words which proceed out of his mouth."

It only remains in furnishing this part of the subject before us, for both writer and reader to put the question each to himself; hath the Lord shewn us the ruined state of our nature by the fall; brought us into an acquaintance with the plague of our own heart; made us sensible that while unacquainted with Christ we are all alike tributaries to sin and satan: and though through the preventing grace of God, we do not all alike "run to the same excess of riot," one as another; yet there is the same propensity in every man's heart by nature; and if we differ in the production of the fruits and effects of sin, yet this ariseth not from any difference in the indwelling sin of our nature, which is the same in all; but from the merciful restraints of grace. And hath the Lord Jesus visited us, as he did this man among the *Gadarenes?* Have we heard his voice; beheld the greatness and loveliness of his power and GODHEAD? And are we now sitting down as he did, at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in our right mind? If such are in the blessed circumstances of our renewed life; then shall we enter into an apprehension of the same feelings of holy joy as the church of old, when she said: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of rightousness, as

a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." (Isaiah lxi. 10)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts." (Mark v. 17.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

Is it possible that the men of Gadara could have made such a request to the Lord Jesus? What had the Lord of life and glory done to merit such treatment? He had dispossessed an evil spirit from a poor creature, who was the terror of the whole country; and had at once delivered him from the fangs of Satan, and them from all their fears. And was this the cause for which they prayed him to depart out of their coasts? Yes! And would these men prefer the raging of the devil among them, to that of having the Son of God to dwell in their coasts? Alas! what an awful account is here! But who were they that desired it? Nay, all of them; for both Matthew and Luke, in their relation of the history, tell us, "that the whole city, and the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about, joined in this request." (Matt. viii. 34. Luke viii. 37.) But if we look a little closer into the subject, we shall discover that somewhat beside was at the bottom of this business. The Lord Jesus had not only done an act of great mercy to this poor man, but he had manifested the sovereignty of his power, in permitting the evil spirit to enter into the herd of swine. Hence they were taken with a great fear.

They had alarming apprehensions concerning themselves; and having no grace to *love* Christ; they had all the alarms of their guilty consciences to *fear* Christ. Hence their language was; and it is the language of all sinners untaught of God, and unrenewed by grace, as Job described them in his days: "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." (Job xxi. 14.)

Let the reader pause over the subject! They that are not brought by an act of grace to *love* God, remain in the same unaltered state of nature to *hate* God. There is nothing neutral in this warfare. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." (Rom. viii. 7.) Every individual of the children of Adam, however specious and plausible in the outward acts of life they may appear, hath an aversion to God. Hence the Lord Jesus, in his conversation with Nicodemus, declared that the very entrance into his kingdom of grace, must begin with regeneration, or the new birth: "Ye must be born again." (John iii. 7.) And this explains to us not only the conduct of the Gadarenes, but of all men as they are by nature. The whole mass of mankind, unless born again, prefer the raging lusts of their own hearts, the dominion of Satan, and the customs, pursuits, and pleasures of the world to Christ; and if not in words, do, in effect, in deeds say unto Christ: "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Hence those sensual, blind, and deluded Gadarenes so acted towards Christ. And hence the multitude of our own equally blind countrymen do the same, "who live without God and without Christ in the world." And are we graciously delivered from the delusion? Yes! if so be the Lord hath brought us out. Do I remember the wormwood and the gall of unawakened, unrenewed, unregenerated nature? Can I look back, and remember the state in which I lived before

this mighty change was wrought? And am I now sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in my right mind? Could I now, as these wretched Gadarenes did, desire Jesus to depart out of their coasts? Nay, is it not the daily, hourly, petition of my soul, that the Lord will not leave me, neither suffer me to depart from him? And is not his constraining love so with me, that I feel a confidence, amidst all my unworthiness and undeservings, he will do as he hath said; "I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (Jer. xxxii. 40.) And it is a sweet thought which the instance of this history furnisheth; that the same love which led the Lord Jesus over the lake of Gennesaret, to redeem the poor man from the captivity of sin and Satan, is part of the same love which first brought him down from heaven to save his church from everlasting ruin. And as the Son of God went over the lake for him, un sent for, and unasked, and departed not from the coasts until he was sent away: so will he never depart from his people, while he puts the cry in their hearts for his manifestations and favour. Very blessedly the Lord hath said this, and therefore our redeemed and regenerated hearts may echo to the same. For he hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say: The Lord is my Helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Heb. xiii. 5.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil, prayed him that he might be with him.

"Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go

home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

"And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis, how great things Jesus had done for him; and all men did marvel." (Mark v. 18—20.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I DETAIN the reader at the very entrance of this Scripture with calling upon him to observe what a mighty change the sovereignty of grace had made in the heart of this poor man. When in the fury of his uncontrouled passions, and under the influence of the devil, his language to Christ was, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus! thou Son of God: I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." But now we hear him earnestly desiring "that he might be with Jesus." Oh! who shall describe the powerful operations of God in the spiritual world! Surely, nothing within the compass of *natural things*, in all the creation of God, is equal to it. It must have been a wonderful sight to have beheld the Son of God commanding the blind eyes to open, and the deaf ears to hear. But the mightiest cures on the *body*, are as nothing compared to the salvation Jesus wrought on the *soul*. To have beheld this demoniac, while under the influence of Satan, desiring Christ to depart from him, and now praying that he might be with him; here is somewhat beyond the mere outside of things. But the Holy Ghost, by Paul, hath taught the cause; when praying to know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward," saith the apostle, "who believe." And then he adds: "that it is according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." (Eph. i. 19, 20.) The greatest act ever wrought in this our world, was the raising Christ from

the dead; in which all the persons in the GODHEAD co-operated and concurred. (See 1 Cor. vi. 14. Rom. i. 4. Rom. viii. 11. I Tim. iii. 16.) And next to this, the resurrection of Christ's people spiritually, from the death of sin by grace. Hence while the Gadarenes desired Christ to depart out of their coasts, this man prayed Jesus "that he might be with him." And tremendously awful as the subject is, in every instance of the unawakened and the unregenerate, both here and hereafter, the different characters are so marked. Could we look into the other world among those that departed out of life as they came into it, under the possession of sin and Satan; could we behold the Cains, the Judases, and the Herods; amidst all the horrors they sustain, there are no desires for Christ. They are described as "gnawing their tongues for pain; but yet blaspheming the God of heaven, because of their pains and sores; and repenting not." (Rev. xvi. 10, 11.)

There is at first view, somewhat which excites astonishment in the account given of the Lord Jesus, refusing this poor man to go with him. "Howbeit Jesus suffered him not." Would it not have been a matter of infinite blessedness to his soul's welfare, to have been constantly with Jesus, to have sat day by day at his feet, and to have "heard the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth?" No doubt this is the desire of all the Lord's people in every age of the church, when brought to the knowledge of the Lord. But the Lord hath provided all things for their *spiritual* welfare; and his spiritual presence is always with them; and in the true and strict sense of the word, they are never separated from the Lord. (See Isaiah xxvii. 2, 3.) As far therefore as relates to the personal interest of the Lord's redeemed ones upon earth; they are not only under the constant eye and favour of the Lord; but

the whole persons in the GODHEAD are visiting and abiding with them. And it is this unceasing love of the Holy Three in one, to the persons of the Lord's people, as they are in Christ, which is the everlasting blessedness, and the everlasting security of the whole church of God, in all generations of the Lord's people. (John xiv. 23.)

But the Lord hath graciously added another cause, for which the Lord Jesus granted not his petition. The Lord hath a church to be gathered in the earth from among men. He hath appointed means and ordinances of grace for this purpose, under his own Almighty power. And one among the several methods the Lord hath taken, to accomplish the sovereign designs of his holy will, is by influencing one poor sinner when called to the knowledge of the Lord, to communicate to other poor sinners what acts of grace hath been shown him. "Go home," said Jesus "to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." And who that is taught of God, but must see an abundance of grace and favour in all this, both as it concerns the soul that makes proclamation of saving mercy; and the church of Christ, in every instance to whom it is related. While the Lord Jesus hath a church on earth, which he will have till the time of the restitution of all things, what can the imagination form so endearing as that of ministering to it, in every method, and by every way the Lord shall afford power and opportunity. And who is there, that hath himself tasted that "the Lord is gracious," but would esteem it his greatest happiness to communicate the glad tidings to others. Surely, if there be a circumstance this side eternity to reconcile the redeemed and regenerated child of God, to a continuance in the body, this is the very one. Neither can any of this de-

scription but be content; yea, more than content to live in the body, amidst all the weariness and sorrows of it, if thereby he can minister to the Lord's glory, in administering to the welfare of the Lord's people.

And what is the upshot of the whole subject as it concerns my reader? Hath the Lord done by you as by him? Hath the Lord dispossessed the power of the enemy, and brought you to sit at the feet of Jesus? And doth the Lord say to you, as to him, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee?" And have you, as he did, published far and near, "how great things Jesus hath done for you?" Oh! what a subject for the whole church upon earth to speak of; when, as Hezekiah said, "The living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: The father to the children shall make known thy truth." (Isaiah xxxviii. 19.)

# THE LORD JESUS

## CURING A DAUGHTER OF ABRAHAM

### IN THE JEWISH SYNAGOGUE.

### HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath day.

"And behold there was a woman, which had a spirit of infirmity, eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself." (Luke xiii. 10, 11.)

### NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

This illustrious history, of our most glorious Lord healing a daughter of Abraham by the word of his Almighty power, is very blessedly introduced in the account given, that it was wrought on the sabbath day, in the Jewish synagogue. We are told, that the Lord was teaching there on the sabbath. It is not said what was the immediate subject of our Lord's discourse. But if we may form conjectures, from the specimen given of Christ's preaching in his first sermon in the synagogue; we may conclude, that he himself was the great theme on which he dwelt; and the purport of his ministry on earth, the leading feature of his

whole doctrine. The Holy Ghost by his servant Isaiah, taught the church to expect her Lord under the endearing character of a Saviour, and his salvation, the great end of his coming. So that all his redeemed ones, when taught of God, might be led to make him the great object of faith, and his finished salvation the great subject of hope. And I have often thought, what a full and finished portrait the Holy Ghost hath drawn of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the pencil of his servant the prophet, so many generations before the Lord of life and glory openly tabernacled in this our world. And no less, what a beautiful correspondence at once appeared, as given by the Evangelist between the portrait and the original, when the Son of God stood forth in the days of his flesh in the Jewish synagogue. We are told that he was teaching in the synagogue; and there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." (Luke iv. 17—22.)

Let the reader duly ponder these words; and then remark how fully and completely every tittle is of Christ, and of his grace to his people. Salvation is wholly in Christ. It was wholly wrought out by Christ. It is the sole incommunicable work of Christ. And as the Lord himself hath stated: "My own

arm brought salvation unto me." (Isa. lxiii. 5.) And it is to be received wholly from Christ. For as the Holy Ghost taught by Peter; so is the unquestionable truth confirmed from age to age, in the hearts and consciences of all the Lord's people: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.)

And I shall not offend, I hope, if in this place I detain the reader one moment longer to observe, that if those who profess to minister in Christ's name would take for a model of preaching, Christ's pattern; here we discover what ought to form the sum and substance of every discourse; namely Christ, and his salvation. Such was the conclusion of Paul; and such will be the conclusion of every one, that is taught and ordained as Paul was, to the ministry the gospel. "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord: and ourselves your servants, for Jesus' sake." (2 Cor. iv. 5.) It is among the most essential of all points, to have a clear, spiritual and scriptural apprehension both of the person of Christ, and the salvation by Christ. And where these fundamental truths are formed in the heart, and made the basis of preaching; they form no less the ground work of all spiritual and scriptural apprehension of the love, grace, and favour, of all the persons in the GODHEAD: not one of which can we have the least knowledge of, or communion with, but as we enjoy them in Christ. But when Christ is preached in all the glories of his person, and in the completeness and fulness of his salvation; and God the Holy Ghost shineth in our hearts; then the redeemed and regenerated child of God receives "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 6.)

The history of this daughter of Abraham, is related

in so plain and unvarnished a manner, as cannot but interest the mind with its simplicity. "And behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself." Though a daughter of Abraham, and included in the covenant of grace; yet as a descendant from Adam she was therefore the subject of sin and sickness; the sure consequences of fallen nature. The Holy Ghost hath stated this so fully, as not to be mistaken. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.) And hence the whole world is but as the cloisters round the pool of Bethesda, where every day are gathered the multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt and withered; and the numberless, nameless, diseases to which all mankind are heirs. One distinguishing feature marked the particular sufferings of this daughter of Abraham; namely, both in the duration and pressure of her disease. No less a time than eighteen years that she had laboured under this infirmity. A large portion in the life of man! And the length of her misery was only heightened by the aggravation of the degree of suffering; for it is said, that "she was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself." What flood-gates of sorrow, pain, and misery, hath the fall of man opened into this our world! Our whole nature, more or less find, as Israel of old did, that even our proposed comforts are tinged with the waters of Marah. And let it be remembered that the Lord's people, as well as the ungodly, are alike the subjects of disease and pain. They differ indeed in the effects and issue of their operations. "Unto the pure," saith the Holy Ghost by Paul, "all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure." (Titus i. 15.) And long and wearisome are afflictions not unfrequently found

by the Lord's people. Eneas, was eight years bedridden, when Peter was sent to heal him. (Acts ix. 33, 34.) The poor man at the pool of Bethesda, had been thirty and eight years under his malady, when the Son of God set him free. (John v. 5.) And the cripple, at the gate of the temple, even from his birth, to the space of forty years, never had walked, until commanded in the name of the Lord Jesus, to arise. (Acts iii. 6—8.)

But when from the infirmities of the body, arising from our fallen state in sin; we go on to consider, and from the same cause, the more awful condition in the disease of our souls; and sometimes the long and deplorable condition the people of God continue under, before they are recovered by grace; the subject increaseth in magnitude! Who shall describe the circumstances, with all their aggravating particulars, in which multitudes of both sons and daughters of Abraham, remain uncalled; not merely for eighteen, or eight and thirty years, but to yet later periods in life. Many, like those labourers, spoken of in the gospel, are not sent into the vineyard, until the eleventh hour; who, though they were before standing idle in the market-place, were yet made equal to those, "which had borne the burden and heat of the day." And perhaps not a few, who like the *thief on the cross*, have been saved at the last hour. What a subject, could it be unfolded fully to view, would the whole open, for calling up the unceasing admiration, love, and praise, of the whole church of God! And suppose the saved which are now in glory, were permitted to look over the battlements of heaven, and relate to us of the various dealings of the Lord to their souls, while like us, they trod this wilderness below! How long the Lord had waited to be gracious to some of them; and how early the Lord had manifested himself to others among them; what

methods in the stores of Omnipotency and grace had been manifested to take away the heart of stone, and give them hearts of flesh; to allure and draw them from the evil of their way, and to deliver them from the powers of darkness; and to translate them into the kingdom of God's dear Son; what endless subjects of increasing admiration would such discoveries make! But though the vail is not drawn aside, which separates the church triumphant above, from the church militant here below; yet the Lord's people themselves, while in the wilderness, can through grace, make discoveries from the diversity of circumstances by which the Lord manifests himself to one different from another, so as to ascertain the graciousness of the Lord's dealings with their souls. And while those, who like this poor woman in the Jewish synagogue have been long waiting before, like her, they received the saving mercy, find cause of comfort and encouragement from similarity of circumstances; others more or less, discover motives of increasing thankfulness; when like Josiah, they have been led from their youth, "to seek the Lord God of their fathers." (2 Chron. xxxiv. 3.) I hardly know a sweeter passage to this amount in the whole Bible, than that which the Lord himself proclaims by the prophet, to his early followers in Israel: "Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying: Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness." (Jer. ii. 2.) And had we the faculty of searching the spirits, and could look into the secret dealings of the Lord with his people, in his ways of grace, as the Lord led the prophet to look into the chambers of imagery in our ways of corruption, while in a state of unrenewed nature, what blessed unfoldings would be laid open to our view, of the marvellous operations of the Lord's love

to his people in all the different periods of life, from childhood to old age. (See Hosea xi. 1, 2. Tim. iii. 15. Isaiah xlvi. 3, 4.) Speak ye, who are of this grace-leading company, to the Lord's praise; for surely the Lord hath given you cause to praise him; and say, if you can, how often since the Lord called you by his grace, and brought you to know him, hath he made your heart full, and your eyes to overflow in the numberless, nameless ways by which he hath manifested himself to you, otherwise than to the world. Surely every child of God hath found, and doth find, continual cause to say with the church of old, "He hath brought me to his banquetting house, and his banner over me is love." (Song ii. 4.)

One interesting view more we must take from the history of this daughter of Abraham, before we prosecute that part of it which relates to the miracle Christ wrought in her recovery; namely, that her crippled state, however sore, did not keep her from the house of God; for though "bowed together, and unable to lift up herself;" yet she was found waiting in her place on the Lord. I cannot help remarking, this is a very precious trait of character. There is a certain somewhat, though I cannot describe it, which many a time, through a long state of unregeneracy in the Lord's people, discovers itself in an inclination, without knowing why, for mingling in the congregation of the Lord's people. And this is discovered in the after stages of life. We can, and do, look back, (when the Lord hath revealed himself to our souls,) and recollect many an event which passed during our blind and ignorant state, that must have been from the Lord: and yet we had no consciousness at the time from whence it came. Why I was led to the Lord's house; or what the cause for which I went there at those seasons, I had no sense to apprehend; but now in the review, I can see it was

from the Lord. (Isaiah xlii. 16.) But the consciousness we now have concerning them, may serve to shew the importance of the Lord's people taking with them to ordinances and the several means of grace, their unawakened relations and servants; not knowing what may be in the dispensations of the Lord concerning the same. And the instance of this poor woman going to the synagogue, though crippled as she was, and no doubt in pain, may become, as indeed it ought, a loud reproach to such as are too easily persuaded to abstain from the house of God, upon small pretences of slight sickness and indisposition. What a blessed opportunity she would have lost, had she excused herself from going to the service of the sanctuary at this very time, when the Son of God came and healed her! Thomas learned somewhat of this in his history. (John xx. 24—29.) And who shall say, what loss numbers sustain, who from frivolous reasons, yea, and sometimes from none at all, consider the attendance on the house of God, once on the Lord's day sufficient, and refrain from any farther attendance through the day? Can such characters be said to know the Lord? It is ever a blessed testimony of grace, when a child of God can say, "Lord! I have loved the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." (Psalm xxvi. 8.) And many of the Lord's family have felt this, and could have said it long before the Lord had made any revelation of himself to them. It is indeed but the glimmering of the day dawn and the day star. But who hath "despised the day of small things?" (Zech. iv. 10.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

"And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God." (Luke xiii. 12, 13.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

SHORT as this history is, it contains within its bosom numberless beauties: The first and highest which demands our attention, is the blessed and irrefragable proof it brings with it of the GODHEAD of our most glorious Christ. Instantly, and by a word, the Lord of life and glory made this poor woman whole. And as at the first creation of nature, the Lord did but say: "Let there be light, and there was light;" so here, the Son of God did but say: "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity; and she was made straight, and glorified God!" And herein was manifested the very character by which the Son of God should be known, according to prophecy, when he would come upon the earth: "Behold, (saith the prophet,) your God will come with vengeance; even God with a recompense. He will come, and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." (Isa. xxxv. 4—6.) And, *secondly*, connected with the same, is the grace of our most glorious Christ, in such acts of mercy. As it is said of our Lord in the instance of the man at the pool of Bethesda, "Jesus knew that he had been now a long time in that case;" so here, in the instance of this daughter of Abraham, Jesus

knew her *eighteen years* of a crippled state, of pain and suffering. And among the causes for which the Lord directed his steps to the pool of Bethesda for the one, and to the synagogue for the other; both these cases were eminently distinguished in the grace of Christ, to mark the features of his Almighty character, "who came to seek and save that which was lost."

And as we prosecute the beautiful history of this daughter of Abraham; and the manifestation of the love of the Lord Jesus towards her; we may remark in the third place; that in her instance, as indeed in every other, the first overtures of communication began with Jesus. It is not said, that she called on Jesus, but that Jesus called to her. So everlastingly sure is that sweet Scripture in all and every instance of grace: "If we love him, it is because he first loved us." (1 John iv. 19.) Little did this woman apprehend, in the day that she went to the synagogue, what blessed effects would follow. The call of the Lord Jesus, and the mercy of healing which accompanied his Almighty word, was no doubt as surprising to her, as when Elijah cast his mantle upon Elisha, and he felt himself constrained to follow him; or, when the Lord called Matthew from the receipt of custom. And these are among the marvellous ways of our wonder-working God! Numbers in the assembly of the Lord's people have found a blessing they never went to seek; and felt a power from the word they never knew before. And this is in perfect correspondence to what the Lord himself hath said by his servant the prophet: "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not." (Isaiah lxv. 1.)

And, *fourthly:* It is not the smallest beauty in this grace manifested by the Lord Jesus to this daughter of Abraham, that it was personal and distinguishing.

There were many no doubt at the same time in the synagogue, labouring under bodily diseases as well as her, but we read of none that were healed. The Lord singled her out from the many; and made the blessing doubly blessed, in being so marked and personal. And it is among the highest tokens of divine favour, when the Lord "takes one of a city, and two of a family, and brings them to Zion." Our adorable Lord himself marks the tendencies of his love with peculiar emphasis. "Many widows (saith Jesus) were in Israel, in the days of Elias; but to none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Zidon. And many lepers were in Israel, in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." (Luke iv. 25—27.) How doth it melt the very soul, when the Lord's mercies are so distinguished; when the Lord's love-tokens come like love-letters from heaven, and are personally directed. This is very blessedly expressed in that Scripture: "That thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee." (Prov. xxii. 19.)

But we must not stop here: Let us, for a fifth observation on this interesting memoir of one of Abraham's daughters, take notice of her state and circumstances, when the Lord Jesus thus manifested his grace to her. As there was nothing said or done by this poor woman, to procure the favour of the Lord Jesus, so neither was there any thing lovely or recommending in her person, for which the Lord manifested such distinguishing grace to her. And this is everlastingly the case in all instances of divine favour. We are altogether passive in the procurement of the blessing, be it what it may; and simply nothing but receivers after all, of all the blessings of divine favour. And in relation to spiritual mercies, this distinguishing property of them meets us in

every direction. Having by nature no knowledge of Christ; neither desire after Christ; nor preparation for Christ; all divine gifts must be as free as the light of heaven; and as unexpected and unlooked for when bestowed, as they are unmerited and undeserved. Who in any one assembly upon earth, would ever have opened his heart to receive Christ, if Christ had not first opened the sinner's heart to receive him? Yea, who in the assembly of the glorified saints in heaven would be there, had not the Lord's grace, and not man's merit, brought the whole of the redeemed family of Christ there, that are there? Sweetly doth the gospel in every page chime to this one all-cheering note: "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. ii. 8, 9.) And lastly, to add no more: Let me close this part of the history with only observing, that from so palpable and decided a testimony as is here given of the special, discriminating marks of grace in the memoirs of this daughter of Abraham, we are warranted to conclude that the issue must be in correspondence to the beginning. We have clearly seen that the whole of this divine love and favour began in the Lord; came wholly from the Lord; was carried on by the Lord; and nothing on the part of this poor woman, either in a way of preparing or deserving, contributing in the smallest degree to the event. Hence, here is an everlasting remedy against all fears, doubts, or misgivings. The dew from the Lord, and the showers on the grass, "waiteth not for man, neither tarrieth for the sons of men." The sun hath been shining on the earth from its creation; and shineth still with the same undiminished lustre, notwithstanding all the unworthiness of the world on which it shines. And the salvation of the Lord's people, being wholly in

its first and principal design for the Lord's glory; the ultimate end of all must be, as the Lord hath already proclaimed; "That in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 7.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day." (Luke xiii. 14.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

We here enter upon a very different view in the history to what we have gone over before. The Lord hath given in the relation of this man's conduct, short as it is, a full drawn picture of human nature in its full colours. Let the reader, before he examines it in its several features, recollect the authority from whence the church is furnished with it; even the Lord Jesus Christ himself; and then ponder it with that solemn attention so awful a representation of the depravity of our fallen nature affords. For alas! it is not simply human nature as manifested in this ruler of the synagogue only; but it bears too striking a resemblance to the whole family, as we all are in the Adam-fall transgression, not to trace our affinity in the likeness more or less which marks all.

The ruler of the synagogue, as his name of office

implies, was distinguished by an authority in regulating and governing things relative to the church. To him belonged the province of appointing the subordinate situations in the synagogue; so that he stood high in the esteem of the people; and of consequence it followed, that his decision on men and things carried with it a great weight. This man, immediately on beholding the miracle which the Son of God had wrought; and hearing the woman, the favoured object of his mercy, glorifying God; "answered with indignation." Answered what? Evidently the *hosannas* of the woman; for at the moment there had been nothing besides said but what the Lord Jesus himself had so graciously spoken: "Woman! thou art loosed from thine infirmity!" And was this the ruler's indignant answer, to the Son of God's clemency? Was this his Amen to the manifestation of Christ's GODHEAD, in an act which none but God could perform! To what a deplorable state is the very nature of man reduced by the fall! And to what lengths of sin is that nature capable of sinking, unless restrained by grace, in the instance of every son and daughter of Adam! For I hope I need not tell my reader, that we read this man's history, and indeed every other man's history to little good, unless we connect with it such of the bearings in it as approximate to our own. It is not of one man more than of another, the Lord by the prophet speaks, when declaring the inherent turpitude of our debased nature; but it invariably includes all: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" But let us pace over the ground of what is here marked, in the ruler's violent invective, and mark, one by one, the several particulars.

And *first:* It is said, "that he answered with indignation." It is easy to form to the imagination the man rising from his seat, full of choler; and though

apparently directing his speech to the people, yet levelling all his wrath against the person of our most gracious Lord. I do not know whether the reader hath himself studiously considered the subject; but if he hath not, it will be his wisdom to seek grace from the Lord so to do. And if taught of God, he will find, that in every heart unrenewed by grace, the whole displeasure is against the person of Christ. For be the profession of religion what it may, the diversity makes no difference, while the person of Christ is unknown. Had the Jewish ruler known Christ, instead of "answering with indignation," when he saw the miracle which Jesus did, he would have sprung from his seat, and acknowledged that prophecy to have been fulfilled, which testified how the Saviour should be known. (Isaiah xxxv. 4—6.) And in all instances it is the same. Christ's person necessarily induceth ignorance in all that concerns the true faith in Christ. And that one Scripture both states and confirms the cause. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." (Rom. viii. 7.) Observe, the enmity is against God; not simply against the ways or works, or ordinances of God, but against God himself. And as the Lord Jesus hath said; "I and my Father are one," (John x. 30.) so the knowledge of the person of the one, implies the knowledge of the person of the other. And hence the Son of God hath also said; "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." (John xiv. 7.) The indignation of this Jewish ruler was against the person of the Son of God. And however differently expressed in the variety of ways among men, it is the same in all ages and generations; the whole fabric of all false religion is founded in the ignorance of, and hatred to, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. (John viii. 24.)

*Secondly:* for we must not stop here: This indig-

nation of the ruler of the synagogue is said to have been excited, "because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day." Admirable cloak to cover over the rancour boiling up in his mind against the person of Christ! Had this man been acquainted with the Scriptures of the prophets, he would have remembered what the Lord had said by Hosea: (vi. 6.) "For I desired mercy," said the Lord, "and not sacrifice: and the knowledge of God, more than all burnt offerings." And here was mercy, even the mercy of mercies, Christ himself; in the knowledge of whom, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this pretended reverence to the sabbath was made the common subterfuge of all the Jewish tribe; priests, scribes, and pharisees, to argue against the person of Christ. Hence we find our most glorious Lord, upon every occasion, exposing their fallacy. And the church of Christ hath reason to be thankful for his many divine decisions upon the subject. I must not stay to enumerate the several occasions, upon which the Lord silenced those adversaries of his person and doctrine. One in point will be sufficient. When on the sabbath day, Jesus and his disciples were passing through the corn fields, and his disciples began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat them; the Pharisees, as usual, took alarm at this supposed breach of the law, and reproved Christ for it. And the Lord referred them to the instance of David eating the shew-bread: and the priests in the temple profaning, according to their interpretation of things, the temple itself; and yet were blameless. And then very blessedly, the Lord of life and glory added, in allusion to himself: "I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath day." (Mat. xii. 1—9.) And let the reader say, (for I prefer referring the judgment to himself,) hath he not

known in his day and generation, (I have seen enough of it in mine,) where men are scrupulous to the nicest point in things of an uninteresting nature; while at the same time regardless of the most momentous truths of vital godliness. No child of God but will reverence the sabbaths of God, and delight in the ordinances of God. But every child of God, taught of God, doth reverence both the sabbaths of God and the ordinances of God, while he useth both to the glory of God. Christ himself is the everlasting sabbath of his people; and he is (as the prophet speaks) "their rest, with which the Lord causeth the weary to rest; and he is their refreshing." (Isa. xxviii. 12.) But it is one of the most awful considerations of the present day, to behold men, like this ruler of the synagogue, tenacious of mere outward ceremonies, while ignorant of the person, and unconscious of the salvation, which is *wholly* in the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Thirdly:* There is another feature to be noticed in this man's portrait, and it is in exact correspondence to the former. A man so professedly fond of the sabbath, would not be supposed deficient in the common principles of humanity, and therefore he did not dare to bid the people not to come to Christ, to be healed by him; all the world would cry out shame upon him if he had; but he did what was tantamount to the same thing, insinuated that Christ had committed a breach of the sabbath in what he had done, in working on the sabbath; and being full of zeal for the honour of God, and indignation at the sin of man, he cried out, "There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day." If such glaring, palpable facts of the total blindness and depravity of the human heart, unrenewed by grace, were not before us, one should hardly suppose it possible that man could

be such a bubble to himself! A miserable, poor woman which had laboured under a spirit of infirmity "eighteen years," in coming to the house of God at an unexpected time, had found perfect restoration, and this ruler of the synagogue, instead of rejoicing in the mercy, and advising all that were under suffering of any kind, to follow her example, and be very diligent in attending the Lord in his house of prayer, that they might find the like mercy; utters a prohibition to their attendance, indirectly charging Christ as a sabbath breaker, and no less blaming God, in following up Christ's breach of the sabbath, with conferring a blessing on the woman at his sovereign command! What a delusion of the mind must this ruler of the synagogue have been under, and yet professing great regard to the sabbath day! But we are losing time, if while we are pacing over what passed in the days of our Lord's flesh in the Jewish synagogue, in reference to this Jewish ruler, we do not bring home the subject to ourselves, in relation to what is continually passing in common life, now in the days of Christ's power. The ordinances and means of grace in the Lord's house of prayer, are so many stated seasons when diseased souls, as well as this woman with a diseased body, are supposed to be waiting spiritual healing from the Lord. And how would our churches be thronged, and their several means of grace be valued, if men were sensible of their souls' malady, as this woman was of her infirmity of body! It is very evident from her history, that she had no apprehension when she went that memorable day to the synagogue, that she should be brought acquainted with him, whose name is, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." (Exod. xv. 26.) And who shall say the numbers, or mark down the distinguishing nature of the mercy which those receive, who from attending the Lord's house of prayer, unexpectedly find the Lord,

or more properly speaking, are found of the Lord, in his ordinances? What discoveries of himself doth the Lord sometimes make to those that seek him not! And what acquaintance with a man's own heart do many receive, when the Lord makes a discovery of himself, and leads them to the discovery of him! When Hazael was sent by the king his master to visit the prophet Elisha, the man of God, on a special message respecting himself, and when the prophet had answered the immediate question of his embassy; before Hazael returned with the prophet's answer to the enquiries of the king, the man of God delivered a message from the Lord to Hazael himself; it is said, "that he settled his countenance steadfastly, until he was ashamed, and the man of God wept. And Hazael said, Why weepeth my Lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child. And Hazael said, But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, The Lord hath shewed me that thou shall be king over Syria. (2 Kings viii. 12, 13.) Here was a man not unlike this ruler in the synagogue, and as great a stranger to his own heart as he was. So that when the prophet ripped open to him the secret recesses lurking there of evil, and only waiting the opportunity to ripen; the man startled at the prospect of what Elisha foresaw he would do in the most consummate wickedness, and cried out at the seeming impossibility, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" And had the ruler in the synagogue been brought acquainted with his own awful state of delinquency, his expression would have been similar. But the Lord left him to his obduracy. The visit of Jesus to the synagogue was on a diffe-

rent errand. This daughter of Abraham was the object of grace *then*. And the instruction of all the sons and daughters of Abraham from it, is the Lord's intention in the record of it *now*. Oh! how blessedly doth the history of this woman teach the Lord's people, and especially his suffering people; when like her, amidst long and powerful infirmities, they are found in their place in his house of prayer; that the eye of the Lord Jesus is upon them, and his ears open to their prayers, and in the set time to favour Zion, he will call them every one to himself; loosing them from their infirmity of a natural state, and bringing them into the "glorious liberty of the sons of God."

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"The Lord then answered him and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox, or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?

"And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" (Luke xiii. 15, 16.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It is worthy remark, that the Lord Jesus Christ asserted and exercised his own supreme authority, when in this act of judgment on the ruler of the synagogue, the Lord said unto him: "Thou hypocrite!" For this province of reading and judging the heart, belongs to none but God. The heart is the secret chamber of a man, which none enters but God. Here is the forge, the anvil, and the hammer, with which men work; and whereby are formed and framed

all their thoughts, words and actions. Now as none but God, the great searcher of hearts, can know all the various workings, and causes of workings which are there; so none but God himself can form right judgment on men in all these particulars. Hence, it is the Lord's sole prerogative. And none among the sons of men, can with safety to themselves, invade this province. For amidst numberless circumstances, which to outward appearance might at first view seem to indicate hypocrisy, and warrant the conclusion in passing judgment on man with man; yet, unless the motives of acting, as well as the actings themselves, were all laid open to view; none are allowed in the court of God, to take the censor's chair, and call another hypocrite. Hence therefore, in beholding our most glorious Lord, assuming to himself this distinguished prerogative of God, and pronouncing the ruler of the synagogue an hypocrite; it became a collateral proof to the miracle the Lord had wrought on the daughter of Abraham, and testified in this instance also, his eternal power and GODHEAD.

But we must not stop here neither: Added to these considerations, there is another very blessed view of our most glorious Christ, thus judging the ruler, in that it became an earnest of what Christ would do, in the great day of judgment. This was but as a sample in anticipation of his Almighty province, under this sovereign character. For as Scripture states it by the mouth of Peter; "We are commanded, said he, to preach unto the people; and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God, to be the Judge of quick and dead." (Acts x. 42.) And the Lord Jesus himself, in one of his divine discourses, hath stated it also; "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the

Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." (John v. 22, 23.) Such views of our most glorious Christ are very sweet and interesting, in testimony of his own Almighty person and character.

And I beg the reader, before he prosecutes the subject in the other parts of it, to pause a moment longer over the contemplation of this divine supremacy of our most glorious Christ, in reading and judging this ruler of the synagogue's heart: and behold in it a farther testimony to the foundation doctrine of our most holy faith. Perhaps, notwithstanding what hath been already said in this statement concerning our most glorious Lord's eternal power and GODHEAD, it hath not struck the reader that this very feature of character in Christ, is the very same feature of character by which each glorious person in the GODHEAD challengeth for himself this Almighty distinction, in proof of each, and all, possessing the full exercise of this divine perfection. God appeals to this act of reading and searching the heart, as among the highest proofs of GODHEAD. Thus we find God the Father speaking on the subject by his servant the prophet Jeremiah: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to the fruit of his doings." (Jer. xvii. 9, 10.) In the book of the Revelations, we hear the Son of God, making a similar proclamation: "These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire. And all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and the heart." (Rev. ii. 18. 23.) And the Bible, from beginning to end, is perpetually speaking of the Spirit Jehovah, as "searching all things; yea, even the deep things of God." (1 Cor. ii. 10.) He is the witness, as the Spirit of adoption, to the sonship of every child of God. And hence the

church is commanded to pray to the Holy Ghost; to "direct their heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." (2 Thes. iii. 5.) I humbly beseech the reader, (and if he be a gracious reader, I venture to persuade myself he will regard my request,) to consider here by the way, how in every part, and by every event more or less, in the word of God, the great fundamental truth of our holy faith is revealed. It is incorporated through the whole volume of Scripture. It stands in the most legible characters to every enlightened eye in every book of inspiration. And while the Unity of the Divine Essence appears as though written with a sun beam, through every part of the holy word; the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, not only is again and again revealed by distinct and personal acts of each, in full proof of Almighty supremacy; but the acts themselves, which can be wrought by none less than God, and which are equally performed by the whole, necessarily prove, "that there are Three, which bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One." (1 John v. 7.) And what a blessed and irrefragable proof is added to these testimonies of Holy Scripture, when the renewed heart *can* and *doth* bear witness to the same, in the spiritual apprehension and enjoyment of the "love of God the Father, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the communion of the Holy Ghost!" (2 Cor. 13, 14.)

I must not dismiss the subject of Christ's reading the heart, without a short observation more on a matter so highly interesting. While as in the instance of the ruler of the Synagogue, it becomes an awful consideration to the ungodly; the Lord's people will find sweet consolation from the consciousness of it. Men of the world cannot but dread such an Inspector as the Lord. An Almighty Anatomist dissects all the foldings and recesses of iniquity, and traces the evil of

their thoughts through all the ramifications. And hence, when no human eye can form conclusions but from outward appearances, the Lord rips open, as in the case of this man, and detects under all covering, and like the removal of varnish from a picture, when that is rubbed off, the real colouring appears. But the Lord's people desire to exercise an holy jealousy over themselves. And conscious that after the strictest scrutiny of their own, much evil lurks beneath; from human examination, they turn to seek divine, and in the words of Scripture say unto the Lord: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.) And the redeemed and regenerated child of God finds rich consolation from this exercise. For as he knows the Lord hath said: "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh unto me;" (Levit. x. 3.) the most anxious desire of his soul is, to approach the Lord in the sanctification of Christ. He knows that he of God is made unto him "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." (1 Cor. i. 30.) Hence his confidence, in all his approaches to the mercy-seat, is in the Lord; and he saith with one of old: "If I regard iniquity in my heart: the Lord will not hear me. But verily God hath heard me: he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me." (Psalm lxvi. 18—20.)

But let us now prosecute the history: The Son of God, having thus assumed to himself the exercise of what was his own personal and peculiar right, as Judge of quick and dead, and pronounced judgment on this ruler of the synagogue, as an hypocrite; proceeded to the proof of it. The Lord made an appeal in the audience of the people to every one present, from the

common circumstances of human life, to convict this man in his own conscience. And not only him, but to put every one that was there to the blush also, if there were any professing, like him, a reverence for the sabbath, while cruelty and envy so rankled in the heart. "Doth not each one of you, said Jesus, on the sabbath day loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? To be sure. The wants of nature, both of man and beasts, are imperative, and will be attended to. History can hardly furnish an instance, where any man purposely tied up his ox or his ass, from watering or food, that the poor animal might perish. And beside, the Lord's appointment of the sabbath, over and above the spiritual design of that sweet day to his people, for more immediate communion with himself, had a special respect in mercy to the beasts. The brute that perisheth hath no sabbath, excepting that of rest. And therefore, to deny the animal his only refreshments, becomes the most palpable breach of the Divine command. The law for the observance of the sabbath, ran in those words: "The seventh day thou shalt rest, that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thine handmaid and the stranger may rest." (Exod. xxiii. 12.) I pause here to meditate on the awful breaches of this law of God, in this our sinful land! Oh! who shall calculate the number of profanations on this holy day, in the troops of pleasure-pursuing men, women and children, who in defiance to all laws, both human and divine, neither reverence the sabbaths of the Lord themselves, nor give rest to their horses. Who shall mark down the transgressions on those occasions, of the most open and avowed contempt to the divine institution, which come up before God!

But we must not stop here: for the Lord hath not rested at this part of the subject, while convicting at the bar of his own conscience this ruler of the syna-

gogue. The Lord having referred to the common and universal clemency of the world, in leading their ox, or their ass, to watering on the sabbath day, grounds the most conclusive and unanswerable arguments for shewing mercy to our fellow creatures by acts of healing, though it be on the sabbath day. "And ought not," said Jesus, "this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo! these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?"

I beg my reader to observe, one by one, the several weighty and most decisive reasons the Lord hath here brought together to heighten the case in point. He begins with the lowest, until by a climax, the Lord riseth to the highest; and in the most finished manner, demands in a way of question, which needs no answer; for in fact it answers itself: And ought not, said Jesus, this woman, under all these circumstances to be healed? Let us follow our most glorious Lord, through the several particulars in his statement, for it will abundantly recompense our attention. The Lord hath here shown, what is elsewhere said of him: "Never man spake like this man." (John vii. 46.)

And, first: The Lord begins with the lowest degree of his statement in the justification of himself, for working this miracle of healing on the sabbath day. "And ought not this woman?" Here the Lord Jesus shows the superiority of our nature to that of the brutes. If men in compassion to the dumb creation, lead them to watering who cannot provide for themselves, and have no faculty of speech to ask the supply of their wants; ought not one formed in the image of God, and designed by the possession of rational and spiritual faculties for communion with God, to be regarded with yet greater attention in all cases of need! The Lord him-

self, in the chapter preceding this hath drawn the compassion and mercy due to our nature, in so gracious a manner, as states the superiority of men to the inferior creation; and most blessedly confirms the doctrine: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Luke xii. 6, 7.)

But the Lord advances higher in the subject, when he adds, that this woman was a "daughter of Abraham." Here was a more special claim upon the benignity of our most glorious Lord, than the common wants of humanity. For being a daughter of Abraham, she was in the covenant of grace. And though the ruler of the synagogue knew it not, yet the Lord himself knew it, and had regarded her as his own, from before all worlds. And the church in after ages, hath been clearly taught the same by the Holy Ghost: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one. And to thy seed, which is Christ." (Gal. iii. 16.) And this chain of the same relationship runs link by link, through all generations. For so it is said: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. iii. 29.)

But thirdly; We ascend another step in the gradation used by Christ, when stating the case of this daughter of Abraham before the Jewish synagogue. She is said to "have been bound by Satan." So that it was no ordinary affliction. Neither was it of short duration, for it extended to no less a time than "eighteen years." And ought not such a case, so dreadfully afflictive, and so highly aggravated, to be relieved as soon as possible? Would any man, under pretence of reverencing the sabbath, protract her

suffering, could he have helped her, even for one hour? Surely, of all days, and though it was the sabbath, none more suited than the sabbath day for so gracious an act. The sabbath day is a day of mercy, given by the Lord to sinful man. And what method can be devised more highly calculated to honour the Lord's day, than in that day shewing mercy? Moreover the act itself, in healing this daughter of Abraham, must have been from the Lord. And though the Lord had forbidden man to work on that holy day; the Lord hath not restrained himself. So that put the whole together into one view, and then say; could it ever be supposed that there existed so unfeeling a creature upon earth, as to behold a woman, the tenderest part of our nature, and a daughter of Abraham too, related to the very stock which this Jewish ruler prided himself upon; labouring under a spirit of infirmity, which constrained her to go double: contrary to the direct posture which distinguisheth man, made after the image of God, from brutes; and which miserable state she had borne for "eighteen years" together; and could in no wise lift up herself; could it be possible for any one in the shape of an human being to feel indignant in beholding the Lord Jesus, by a word speaking, making her at once whole; and hearing the poor object of such mercy glorifying God! Oh, what obduracy hath sin wrought in the heart! Oh, what grace in our most glorious Christ! Blessed, blessed, for ever be his holy name, in being touched with the feelings of our infirmities. Never surely, was the synagogue so blessed as by thy presence; neither any of thy sabbaths so honoured, as when thou dispensest in them such mercies. Come, Lord Jesus, now in this day of thy power, as thou didst then, in the days of thy flesh; come continually into thy church, and manifest this

grace in saying; "I am come that they might have life; and that they might have it more abundantly." John x. 10.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him." (Luke xiii. 17.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

THINK reader! what an immediate effect followed our glorious Lord's alarming expostulations and judgment on the Jewish ruler! "All his adversaries were ashamed." And well they might, from an appeal so striking and unanswerable. Yes; so it was then; so is it now, and oh! how much more so will it be to the end of time; and in the tremendous judgment that follows! But mark the contrast with the others that "rejoiced for all the glorious things done by Christ." Yes; all the faithful in Christ Jesus rejoice now; and what a shout of praise will burst forth then, from ten thousand times ten thousand voices, when "Jesus shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe!"

A few words in conclusion, before we take leave of this beautiful and interesting memoir, will not be unprofitable, if the Lord accompany our review of it with his blessing. We have read the history of this crippled state of this daughter of Abraham, as related to her body; but have we connected with it, what all such maladies of the body emblematically set forth —the more crippled state of the soul! The whole world indeed, is but as one great hospital of human

sicknesses; but who shall describe the still greater and infinitely more desperate disease of sin throughout the whole world! This woman had a spirit of infirmity, and was bowed together; but what was this, to the spiritual infirmity of all unawakened, unregenerated, unhealed sinners! She could in no wise lift up herself; neither can they, while in that state, lift themselves to the Lord in prayer or praise, supplication or thanksgiving. This poor woman had laboured under her bodily complaint "eighteen years;" but they a whole life; yea, a whole life not only crippled but spiritually "dead in trespasses and sins;" and unless quickened by sovereign and Almighty grace, will continue so for ever. Oh! who shall speak to the greatness, freeness, fulness, and richness of that Almighty salvation, when the Son of God doth by the sinner as he did by this daughter of Abraham, when he said: "Thou art loosed from thine infirmity." And I hope the memoir of this woman will be useful to all the Lord's people, in prompting them to be always found, if possible, in their own places on the Lord's day in the house of God. Neither her infirmity, nor being bound together prevented her, though long, and no doubt painful were her exercises; neither should it, but from the greatest necessity, prevent us. The Lord hath promised his presence in the assemblies of his people. They are of Divine appointment. And we may safely conclude, that "wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, he is in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.) And though family worship, or private and personal devotion, are much to be prized; yet we read, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob." (Psalm lxxxvii. 2.)

I only add, what blessed encouragement from the whole, ought all the sons and daughters of Abraham to gather, from the graciousness of Christ, manifested

to this poor woman. She asked no cure, she sought no remedy for her body, when Jesus came unasked, and blessed her in both. And such is it now, upon numberless occasions, according to his own Divine promise: "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Isaiah lxv. 24.)

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# CHRIST,

AND

# THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And he must needs go through Samaria.

"Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

"Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

"There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink." (John iv. 4—7.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

Few of the Scripture records, in the manifestations of the Lord of life and glory to his people, have been read with more delight, or rendered more eminently useful under the Lord's teaching, to the encouragement of sinners, and the comforting of

saints, than this history of "the woman of Samaria." Every redeemed and regenerated child of God, into whose hands this interesting memoir hath come, cannot but have found it so. Yea, the whole church of God may see cause to bless God in his Trinity of persons for it. We trace the everlasting love of God the Father, in having before all worlds given this woman, among the whole body of the church, to his dear Son. And we no less discover the everlasting love of God the Son; who from all eternity having betrothed her to himself, redeemed her from the ruins of the fall, during the time state of the church by his blood; and now directed his steps to the well of Jacob, to call her by his grace! And equally we find cause to bless God the Holy Ghost, for his divine baptism in regeneration, in making her willing in the day of Christ's power. And to whom, but to him the Almighty Author of all Scripture, shall the church ascribe the glory, for causing so blessed a record to be made in his holy word; preserving it, and handing it down through all the intermediate ages to the present hour; and making it a sweet savour of Christ, both of his person, and of his salvation, in every place, and in every heart, to whom the Lord hath sent it?

The history opens in a very engaging manner: "And Jesus must needs go through Samaria." What! was there an absolute necessity for it? Yes! Jesus knew that the hour was come for the recovery of this woman who was there, from the state of nature to grace; and this was not the effect of a sudden impulse on the mind of Christ; for the thing itself had been settled with all the other events connected with it, from all eternity. The same covenant engagements of the Holy Three, "that bear record in heaven, and which Three are One;" which in that sacred counsel of the most Holy Trinity, before all

worlds, ordained the creation of the church in Christ, ordained all the circumstances to the most minute point of the being and well-being of the church in Christ; and arranged the whole in such precision of infinite wisdom, love, and power, as nothing in all the after stages of time should arise to counteract or do away. Hence, when the whole body of Christ's mystical members, whom God chose in Christ, came up in view to the divine mind before the world, each and every individual of Christ's mystical members, together with that choice, had all the other events connected with this immense blessing of distinguishing grace arranged, according to the covenant "ordered in all things and sure." *Where* each should be born in nature; *when* also, in what age and generation of the church: from *whom* in their parents after the flesh; and by what *means* their new birth in the Spirit should be accomplished. And no less, their special states and circumstances in all other events connected with them. Hence some poor, others rich; some in a beautiful appearance of nature, others imperfect and deformed; some exercised with sore and heavy sicknesses, others very little visited with pain or sorrow; together with all that infinite variety which constitute the many distinctions in life, from the prince to the beggar; all these are in the needs be, according to the divine ordination; and so appointed, as shall best subserve the first and ultimate design; in the promotion of the divine glory, in the welfare of the church. And the apostle Paul was taught to teach the Lord's people this foundation truth of our most holy faith, when in that comprehensive Scripture, he blesseth God for the church, that the same sovereignty of love and grace, which made choice of their persons to be made partakers of Christ, appointed all the secondary means for the sure attainment by

him, of life and salvation. "But we are bound (said he) to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thes. ii. 13, 14.)

Let the reader pause over the subject, and ponder it well. And if the Lord be his teacher, he will find that the same needs be which was upon Christ, to go through Samaria, is, and hath been, in everlasting operation from the first formation of his church through all time, and will be to all eternity. As there could have been no church without Christ; there was a *needs be,* that he should be her Head and Husband from everlasting. And when the church was sunk and fallen, the same necessity was upon him to redeem; for to him alone the right of redemption belonged. And hence we read his own most gracious words; when after he had accomplished redemption by his sufferings and death, Jesus said: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?"—And in every minute event belonging to the glorious Head of the church or his members, the same doctrine holds good: and runs like a golden chain hanging together in links, to bring up after it all that takes place in respect to salvation, in the history of every child of God. I find it good to have this in view, in all providences, all means of grace, all circumstances of sorrow or joy. It is the greatest of all encouragement to a faithfulness in the ministry, to call to mind this constraining love of our most glorious Christ. And when I look round, and behold the many in a large congregation, of whom we hope the best things, and things which accompany salvation; I find no small lifting up in hope, that the many wanting help

among the souls of the Lord's people, and the many waiting souls among the Lord's people, that can derive no good until Jesus comes, will put this blessed necessity upon Christ; and I sometimes say: Surely there is a needs be Jesus should be here. Is it not his gospel that is here preached? And doth the Lord ever send his gospel, but where He comes himself? Nay, doth not the Lord know, that without his presence, he that ministers, and they that are ministered unto; are alike helpless and vain! Blessed Lord Jesus! I bless thee for this needs be, which directed thy steps to Samaria! And let all thy church take comfort from the view of the same; the promise of our God makes a needs be also now: that wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, there thou art in the midst of them. (Mat. xviii. 20.)

The well of Jacob, to which the Son of God in our nature came, and by the side of which he sat, would furnish no small subject for meditation; but this is at present inadmissible. I would only observe that the well itself is not mentioned in the patriarchal history; but only how it became his, in Jacob's purchase of this parcel of land of Hamor, Shechem's father. (Gen. xxxiii. 19. The deed of gift by Jacob to Joseph of this land, is noted in (Gen. xlviii. 22.) And what is yet somewhat more memorable, that this was the sacred spot where were deposited the bones of Joseph. (Compare Gen. l. 25. with Joshua xxiv. 32.) What passed in the Redeemer's mind on this subject of the bones of Joseph near him is not noticed. But it was thus the patriarchs which lived and died in faith took possession of Canaan; a type of Christ; "the rest that remaineth for the people of God." (Gen. xlix. 29—31. Isa. xxviii. 12. Psalm cxvi. 7. Mat. xi. 28. Heb. iv. 9, and xi. 13.)

I detain the reader a moment, if it be but a moment, to bid him behold Jesus wearied with his journey.

Yes; for let it never be overlooked; "that in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren." (Heb. ii. 17.) The curse extended to weariness of body; while in the sweat of the face, man was doomed to eat bread. In redeeming his people from "the curse of the law," in being made "a curse for them;" this was included. (Gal. iii. 13.) Sweet thought of consolation to the Lord's people, amidst all their weariness and exercises in life! What so animating, in treading any and every sorrowful path, as to trace his footsteps, who "was made perfect through sufferings." (Heb. ii. 10.) As Jesus sat wearied with his journey, there cometh a woman to draw water. Every incident in this narrative is highly to be regarded. It was now the sixth hour; that is twelve o'clock at noon: the mid hour of the day; when, if a sunny day, and not cloudy, the great luminary being then at his meridian, must, in an hot country like Samaria, have been pouring his rays with great warmth upon the earth. Let the reader mark distinctly the several bearings of the history, all in their tendency leading to the accomplishment of the purpose for which Christ must needs go to Samaria.

First, the disciples were sent away; and did not return until that the Lord had finished the great work he came to accomplish. (See 26 and 27 verses.) There is a great feature of our dear Lord here, that is very lovely. The disciples were sent away, as appears by the sequel, that the Lord Jesus might have a more blessed opportunity for the accomplishing of the great purpose for which he came to Samaria; namely, this woman's conversion. What the Lord had to say to her, in ripping open her conscience, the Lord would not suffer them to hear. So is it now. If the reader knows any thing of the Lord, he will gladly confess, that there are such things as pass

between the Lord and his soul, as will not admit of a third person being present. This is very blessedly shewn in that Scripture which saith: "The heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy." (Prov. xiv. 10.) How gracious; yea, very gracious, doth the Lord deal by his people in this way, when searching their hearts, as he said he would of old "Jerusalem with candles;" and while convincing of sin, until we blush with shame and confusion of face, the Lord soothes the soul with his love, and puts our "tears into his bottle." (Zeph. i. 12. Ezra ix. 6.)

And it may be farther observed, that the Lord purposely sent away his disciples; for his free conversation with this woman, a Samaritan, they would not have been able to explain. The Lord when sending them to preach, forbad their going into any city of Samaria. (Matt. x. 5.) The Jews had such a natural hatred to the people of Samaria, that they connected with it the influence of the devil. "Say we not well (said they) that thou art a Samaritan, and hath a devil?" (John viii. 48.) Hence the conversion of the woman the disciples could not have entered into. This was one of those many things, which Jesus afterwards told them he had to teach them of hereafter; but that "they could not bear them now." (John xxi. 12.) And hence we read of their surprise at their return from the city, in finding that Christ had been discoursing with the woman, though they knew not what a great mercy Jesus had wrought for her.

Next, notice that Christ was first waiting for the woman, and not the woman waiting for Christ. For no sinner on earth could have been more ignorant of Christ, or her need of Christ, when she came to the well, than this poor woman. Her concern was only to get water for her household; she had no consci-

ousness who she should meet, nor what events would follow. Here let us pause! for we are too highly concerned in the subject hastily to pass it over. In all cases of soul concerns, the Lord is first in the work, as Christ was here. The prophet in speaking of this divine act, thus expresseth it: "And therefore will the Lord wait that he might be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him." (Isa. xxx. 18.) And it is marvellous at times, to trace the Lord's ordination in the most common and apparently insignificant things, to bring about matters of such moment. As in this instance here; the necessity of a little water for her household led her to the well. And there sat Jesus waiting for her. And in how many circumstances of a like nature may we find when looking back upon the past, where the Lord hath directed his providences to minister to the word of his grace! Sometimes the sinner feels inclined to move in this or that direction, and there he finds Christ. And not unfrequently, the Lord comes to the heart and house of the sinner, and Christ finds him. Zaccheus was prompted as he thought by mere curiosity to see the person of Christ; and when he least thought of following Christ, Christ called him. (Luke xix. 1—6.) Matthew, another publican, was in his gainful, but odious employment of a tax gatherer, when Christ passed by; and, as it is said by the prophet, was "found of him that sought him not." (Isa. lxv. 1.) And could the subject be unfolded, in all the instances of the Lord's effectual calling of sinners from the error of their ways; it would be found that in every one, similar have been the Lord's operations. And when the redeemed and regenerated child of God, in the after stages of his life, can, and doth, look back, and trace the distinguishing mercy

to its source; how very affecting sometimes, as well as overwhelming with astonishment is it, to behold by what a wonderful way the Lord had ordered events to meet: and by such a concatenation of circumstances, as to induce such powerful acts of grace, by such slender means in providences. Nay, sometimes and not unfrequently, by producing the very reverse of what they themselves intended. And of this the Lord hath not left himself without witness; when many have gone to the house of God, from motives totally different from all seriousness; and where they that went to mock, have been sent home to pray. Very blessed to this purpose, is that Scripture. (Isa. xlii. 16.)

But we must not stop here. As Jesus was first at the well, so Jesus first began the subject which led to this woman's conversion. "Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink!" As all the preparation for grace, so all the overtures of grace, come wholly from the Lord. A sinner can say nothing to the Lord, until the Lord hath first said somewhat to the sinner. "The preparation in the heart of man, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." (Prov. xvi.) And did the limits which must be observed in a work of this kind favour, what a subject might be opened for the contemplation of the Lord's going before in all the ways of grace; and in a thousand instances of preventing and restraining, quickening and renewing, strengthening and confirming grace; and in short, all grace; in which the Lord is always before hand with his people, according to that sweet promise: "It shall come to pass, that before my people call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. (Isaiah lxv. 24.) The apostle very blessedly sums up the whole, when he calls God, the "God of all grace, to perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle; and ascribes to him glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Pet. v. 10, 11.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it, that thou being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

"The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water?

"Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

"Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.

"The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water that I thirst not; neither come hither to draw." (John iv. 9—15.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It is not possible for persons who are unacquainted with the history of the Jewish and Samaritan nations, to have an adequate idea what an astonishment must have been excited in the mind of this woman, at the unexpected address of Christ; and more so at the very gracious manner in which with his divine benignity he spake to her. Her surprise was great; but no doubt the gentleness and meekness of Christ made her more astonished; "for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." In matters of barter, where either nation had an eye to gain, they did on both sides converse and trade. But here was a Jew,

as Jesus appeared in his garb and apparel to have been, asking a favour from her a Samaritan; a thing, which from the pride of the Jew, was hardly known in history. She expressed her surprise, but which brought forth the Lord's answer, indeed the very point for which Jesus began the conversation. "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." (John iv. 10.)

Now here, the subject opens to us in all its blessedness and glory. The Lord Jesus, as it evidently appears by the history, asked for *water*, on this very account; for we do not read during the whole conversation or after, that the woman gave him of the well, or that Jesus slaked his thirst at that time. The subject Christ had in view was infinitely higher. And having thus called up her attention by what he said, he now adverted to the one blessed design which brought him to Samaria. Let us attend to the several particulars contained in this answer of our most glorious Christ: and if the Lord be our teacher, to open our Lord's intention in the words themselves, we shall see that in the bosom of them is contained the leading points of the whole gospel.

The first thing which arrests our attention in those verses, according to the order in which they stand, is the very striking contrast between the conduct of this woman, and the meekness and gentleness of our most glorious Lord. There is a vast deal of upbraiding and acrimony in the expressions; "that thou being a Jew, shouldst ask of me for drink!" As if she had said, Is it possible that you can expect such courtesy from me, when your nation holds ours in such contempt, as to declare, "that whosoever eats bread with a Samaritan, is as if he ate swine's flesh!" We have this account in their history. To

this contumely of the woman, the Lord returned his most mild and gracious answer: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink;" instead of my asking you a favour, you would have sought of me, and asked of me, and I would have given you *living water*. Let the reader pause over these divine expressions of our most blessed Lord, for they are most blessed. Here we are plainly taught, that as in the instance of this Samaritan woman, so in the instance of every other son and daughter of Adam, involved in the same situation by nature with her; it is ignorance of Christ, who he is in himself; what the Lord Jesus possesseth; and what infinite riches of all blessings he hath to bestow; these are the sole cause of all that indifference that Christ receives from the world. And it is blessed, yea, very blessed to observe, as in the example of this woman, so in every other: when the Lord begins his work of grace upon the soul, it is in bringing every poor sinner acquainted with the person of Christ, and the salvation of Christ, the soul's need of Christ, and the soul's everlasting safety and blessedness in Christ; until a life of faith is wrought in the heart, and "Christ is formed in the heart the hope of glory." I do not stay to mark the order of this divine teaching; neither do I presume to limit the Holy One of Israel, when bringing souls under the unction of the Holy Ghost, as to the divine order itself; when the Lord "convinceth of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." (John xvi. 8—11.) But this may be safely averred from the divine authority of that Scripture; that the knowledge of the person of Christ; and the knowledge of the complete and finished salvation by Christ; and the sense that every sinner taught of God, hath of his need of Christ; and his perfect approbation of being saved by Christ; and his coming up out of the wilderness leaning upon Christ; these are among the great rudiments

in the divine science, "which maketh wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. iii. 15.) And it is a very blessed consideration to every redeemed and regenerated child of God, that in the accomplishment of this sovereign act of grace; each glorious person in the GODHEAD takes equal part. Christ is the gift of God, as the Lord Jesus himself here states. (Isa. xliii. 6) And Christ himself is the whole sum and substance of salvation. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.) And God the Holy Ghost it is, which glorifies Christ in this Almighty character, as Christ himself declared, when he said: He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." (John xvi. 14.) And had the Samaritan woman at the time the Lord Jesus so answered her reproachful taunt about Jews and Samaritans, known who Christ was and is, how would she have fallen before him, and blessed God for his unspeakable gift! What saith the reader to this statement? If the Lord Jesus Christ be so known, so received, so lived upon, so enjoyed; and is known in the glories of his person; the infinite fulness, suitableness, and completeness of his salvation, living upon him, and living to him, from day to day; "this is indeed the living water, which the soul that drinketh of shall thirst no more."

But these precious truths the woman had not even began to learn. She was only at present matriculated in the Lord's school; and like those that stumble on the dark mountains of uncertainty, who travel before sun rise, she raiseth up yet further objections both against the person and the words of Christ. "Sir (said she) thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob?"

All this was evidently delivered in a contemptuous way. A stranger and a Jew, to stop her in her avocations, and to talk to her about *living* water, when but just before he had asked for the *common* water of the well! All this was mysterious to the woman. But let the reader not fail to observe, that there was a certain somewhat in what Christ had said which arrested her, and she could not go away. And not unfrequently is it found, when sinners are first brought under the word of the Lord, though they know not what to make of it, and cannot discern the truth; they are compelled to listen, and dare not stay away from the "footsteps of the flock, beside which the Great Shepherd feeds his sheep." (Song i. 7, 8.) And I believe there are many of the Lord's family, in the after stages of life, when from long standing in the church, can and do call to mind portions of the divine word which they had heard, at a time that *then* made little or no impression upon them; but which they *now* recollect with much delight. No doubt this woman of Samaria, long after Christ had left her, had many sweet lookings back to the first words of Christ, and found a great blessedness in them: however at the time when Christ first spoke to her, she was startled, when the meek and lowly Redeemer said unto her, "Give me to drink!"

But let us proceed. The Lord Jesus made no observation to what the woman of Samaria had said in her comparative statement of Jacob being so much greater than He was; but prosecuting the one great object the Lord of life and glory had in view to her conversion, took occasion to tell her, that the water of Jacob's well only satisfied the wants of nature, and was intended for no more; but, said Jesus, the water that I shall give, shall so fully satisfy the soul of him that drinks it, "that he shall never thirst; but it shall be in him a well of water, springing up

into everlasting life." By the woman's reply, it appears that the Lord had not as yet wrought conviction in her heart. She was still ignorant of Christ's person, and consequently ignorant of his salvation. She therefore answered, and if not in the same strain of contumely as before, yet in the same unenlightened state of ignorance: "Sir, give me this water that I thirst not; neither come hither to draw."

But let me hope that my reader hath some blessed views of those precious words of Christ; yea, and if he be among the redeemed and regenerated children of God, he must have, I am sure, some sweet and precious enjoyment of them. Personal knowledge of Christ, and personal communion with Christ, are frequently represented in holy Scripture, under figurative expressions of living water. Yea, as those spiritual blessings in Christ, and with Christ, bring with them fellowship and communion with all the persons in the GODHEAD; so are they elegantly set forth in Scripture by those metaphors. All the persons in the GODHEAD, are called by this name. God the Father, speaking of his people's neglect of attention to him, compares himself to a "living fountain of waters; and of hewing out to themselves broken cisterns, which can hold no water." (Jer. ii. 13.) God the Son, is called by the church, "a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." (Song iv. 15.) And it is invariably spoken of God the Holy Ghost, when describing his Almighty person, and his gracious influences under the images of "floods and rivers." (Isa. xliv. 1—4. John vii. 37—39.) And when Jehovah in his Trinity of persons, is described all in One, the same similitude is chosen. A beautiful instance we have in the close of the book of Revelations; "And he shewed me a pure river of water, clear as crystal, proceeding

out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Rev. xxii. 1.) And let the reader not overlook, how very beautifully the several properties are made to correspond in the image with the substance intended. It is a river, not a stream, always flowing; and never to be drained, but running for ever. And it is a *pure river*, for it is God himself, in his Trinity of persons. And it is a river of life; for it quickens and gives life to the sinner, when "dead in trespasses and sins;" and preserves life when quickened, everlastingly, to all the saints of God. And it is a *clear river*, for none of its streams can be polluted. And in "proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb;" it shews that God and the Lamb have one and the same throne, as Christ said: "I and my Father are one." (John x. 30.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

"The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said; I have no husband:

"For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

"The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." (John iv. 16—19.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I PRAY the reader, that as he prosecutes this interesting memoir of the woman of Samaria, he will not fail to observe the very gracious method the Lord Jesus was pleased to adopt for her conversion. Step by step, in the most gentle and affectionate manner, the Lord led her on to attend to him, while opening

to her the history of herself, until he had brought her to the clear apprehension of her own worthlessness, in order to shew Christ's all-sufficiency to save her.

To this purpose the Lord first introduced himself with a seemingly humble request for a little water. Then the Lord advanced in discourse to shew the vast difference between the elementary water of nature, and the spiritual water of life; intimating of his possessing the one, while he appeared to ask her for the other. And arresting her attention to the apprehension that amidst all the plainness of apparel, and the humility in which he appeared, did she but know who he was, she would have left every other consideration to have sought his grace and favour. Thus far the Lord Jesus had advanced, while the woman remained perfectly ignorant of her own guilt and shame before Christ, and of his Almightiness and character. She did indeed ask the question in a taunting way, whether he was really greater than Jacob; and attempted as she thought to put him to the proof of what he said, by pretending to ask for this *living water,* which Christ had spoken of. But now the Lord having thus brought forward to her view the outlines of the gospel, in the proclamation of himself, as possessing *living water,* and declaring the blessed properties of the same; now brought home the doctrine from the head to the heart, and introduced a few words which carried with them the arrow of conviction to her conscience: "Go (said Jesus) call thy husband, and come hither." I have no husband, (said she) with all the confidence imaginable; taking for granted that this stranger had not the least apprehension to the contrary. "Thou hast answered right, (said the Great Searcher of hearts) for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thine husband: in that saidst thou truly."

But though this detection led her to conclude that the person with whom she was then discoursing was somewhat more than ordinary, to know this part of her history; yet, there was nothing more as yet in the divine discourse of Christ, leading her to discover who Christ was; or her need of Christ for salvation. Her adulterous state she found Jesus knew; but she knew not him. "Sir, I perceive (said she) that thou art a prophet." And from this conviction, she went off to an enquiry in relation to the dispute between the Samaritans and the Jews, where was the right place to worship. We shall enter upon this part of the subject hereafter; but for the present, I am anxious that my reader should particularly observe in this striking instance, the grace of Christ, and his divine manner of instruction, in thus gradually preparing the woman's mind for the discovery of himself.

And I would herefrom take occasion to remark, that this is for the most part, the plan in divine teaching, when the Lord is bringing sinners to himself. He doth by them as he did by this poor woman. He opens to their view their sinful lost estate. He leads them into the chambers of imagery in their own heart, as the Lord did the prophet. They are alarmed at the discovery; and like her, begin to question after what is the true worship. Their convictions are *legal*, not *spiritual*. For until Christ hath made discoveries of himself, though like the woman, the Lord Jesus may be supposed a prophet as he was by her; yet until Christ is known in his GODHEAD, and in his manhood, and in his union of both; and which can only be spiritually known and believed; all the convictions of sin will only lead to the attempt of self-reform; and an attempt after self-righteousness. And this explains to us what is so very generally considered as conversion among men. Sinners when convinced

of sin, as this woman was of her sad course of life, for the moment begin to think of a reform; and perceiving as she said that Christ was a prophet, she asked the right way of worshipping God. All that feel alarm in their guilty consciences, but while ignorant of Christ, do the same. They hope to amend; and by prayers and alms, and good works, which they consider the right way of worshipping God, conclude that they shall now please God, as by their former life they have displeased God. But in all these things here is nothing of Christ. It is only shifting ground. From profaneness turning to sobriety; and from neglecting the means of grace, setting up a form of religion in following them. All which, as it begins in creature strength, riseth no higher than creature reformation. Here is nothing of the divine life; nothing of the new birth; and as it begins in nature, so it ends in the same. What is short of Christ is short of all. Thus far the woman of Samaria was advanced, and no farther. And the Lord Jesus now led her on to the gracious manifestation of himself, until the conviction ended in the most complete discovery that the stranger she had met at the well was no other than the Lord of life and glory.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

"Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers

shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

"God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.

"The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

"Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee, am he." (John iv. 20—26.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I ADMIRE the infinite wisdom of our most gracious Lord, as well as the infinite grace manifested in the plan He was pleased to adopt for the divine instruction of this woman of Samaria. Having shewn her that he was perfectly well acquainted with her history, he now proceeded to shew her that he was possessed also of the perfect knowledge of the true principles of divine worship. And without staying to pay any further attention to her question, which savoured more of curiosity than usefulness, where God was to be worshipped; the Lord Jesus called her attention to the consideration *how* that worship should be performed. The hour was approaching when the true church would emerge from the rubbish of mere forms and ceremonies, under which, through the ignorance and superstition of men, it had long been buried; and arise to the scriptural and spiritual apprehension of the divine knowledge of God in divine things. The Lord then delineates the character of true worshippers; and such as the Father seeketh to worship him: "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."

I detain the reader but for the moment, to observe what a brief statement the Lord hath made of this

most interesting subject: and though brief, yet it doth in fact contain in its bosom the sum and substance of all vital godliness. The knowledge of the Lord in his Trinity of persons is all spiritual. Communion with the Lord is all spiritual. The incomings of grace to every redeemed and regenerated child of God are wholly spiritual; and the out-goings of the soul in acts of faith, and love, and adoration, and praise, are altogether spiritual.

And though our adorable Lord did not in so many words say, that all the springs of spiritual life were, and are, in Him; yet by the woman's answer, it is evident that the bias of her mind was led by Him so to interpret what He said, for she instantly spoke of the *Messiah* as the Holy One, which would make known when he was come both the nature and perfection of God, and explain the principles of true worship. "I know (said she) that Messias cometh which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things." It is not to be explained upon any principles whatever, how the mind of the woman should have been so instantly led to speak of Christ; unless we suppose, (which seems evidently to have been the case) that the Lord Jesus directed her mind to the subject. And moreover that as Christ, whenever he should arrive, was to be of the seed of David, that this Samaritan woman should have conceived so high an idea of his GODHEAD, as to know that he would teach all things. I pray the reader not to overlook it. The Christ she expected, evidently she looked for as the *Emanuel;* even Him whom the prophets all with one voice predicted: *God with us.* She had no consciousness that Him, with whom she was then conversing, was the very person. Of this, though at the moment she expressed such sublime conceptions of the Messiah, nothing it should appear was further from her thoughts than that this was He. But hearing this

stranger, as to her Jesus seemed, speak so blessedly of spiritual worship, as the whole of spiritual life, and all flowing *from* God, and leading *to* God; she instantly connected Christ as the source and spring of all; and who in his advent, would open and explain all things to his people.

The Lord having thus wound up the woman's mind to the point all along he had intended, and by convincing her of her lost estate by nature, and her total inability to save herself; and having prepared her yet further for the manifestation of himself, by shewing in what the pure spiritual adoration of Jehovah might consist; now makes a clear revelation of himself, in the most affectionate and endearing manner, "and saith unto her, I that speak unto thee, am he!"

Let the reader figure to himself if it be possible, what must have passed in the woman's mind in the first event of this wonderful discovery! And let him connect with it, what infinite grace and power must have accompanied that discovery in the Lord's communication of himself to her heart. Hence the most complete conviction at once took place in the accomplishment of salvation. The day spring from on high now shone upon her soul, and all the blessed effects followed. No doubt the same sovereignty which all along had been manifested by our glorious Lord through all the preceding conversation, was exercised to induce in her every corresponding affection. She was led to connect with one view the whole sum and substance of what Christ had said to her, and was at once overwhelmed with the most perfect assurance, that this was the Christ.

There are several interesting considerations which present themselves to our notice, which ought not to be overlooked in this condescending and gracious conduct of our most glorious Christ. As, *first:* It is of all others the most important to observe, that in his

discoveries of himself to this woman of Samaria, Christ became his own witness. This was not usual with our Lord. But it was here very highly important in proof of his GODHEAD: because each person in Jehovah, thus gave testimony to Christ. God the Father proclaimed who Christ was, at his baptism: (Matt. iii. 17.) And here God the Son proclaims himself. And no less God the Holy Ghost, in that memorable Scripture, (Acts v. 32.)

And, *secondly*: It is not of small consideration in a subject, in which the Lord of life and glory was revealing himself to a sinner, that Jesus should have done it so plainly as he did. Upon other occasions we find him referring to his works, and sometimes to the report of others by way of conviction. (See Mat. xi. 3—5. John xviii. 33, &c.) But here at once the Lord declares himself to be the Messiah.

And, *thirdly*: The manner of expression in which Christ expressed himself is worthy high regard. "I that speak unto thee, am he." The same method the Lord adopted upon several occasions: Thus to the man born blind, whose eyes Jesus opened, we find him so graciously condescending. (John ix. 37.) And in that yet more remarkable instance in Christ's conversation with the Jews, when claiming a priority of being, to Abraham he said: "Before Abraham was, I am." (John viii. 58.) All which demonstrate the special emphasis of, "I am?" (Exod. iii. 14.)

And, *lastly*, to mention no more: It is evident from the whole history, that when the Lord Jesus thus made a discovery of himself in this distinguishing manner, the *outward* proclamation of the word was accompanied with the *inward* illumination of his grace; and the same Almighty Lord, who thus made himself known to the woman, gave her the power of spiritual discernment, that that discovery should not be in

vain. For what the Lord said upon another occasion was equally operative in this: "The words that I speak unto you (said Jesus) they are spirit, and they are life." (John vi. 63.) It will be a blessed thing if my reader be able in the memoir of his own life, as was in the case of that woman of Samaria, to discover the words of Christ by their effect; and to say as one of old did: "I shall never forget thy word, for by it thou hast quickened me." (Psalm cxix. 93.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE

"The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

"Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

"Then they went out of the city, and came unto him." (John iv. 28—30.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

We hear no more of Jacob's well, neither of the business which brought the woman of Samaria there; but having now seen Christ herself, and felt the sovereignty of his grace in her heart, she hastens to the city to carry the blessed information thither; and to bring others, if possible, to the same participation. "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" The truth was, that Jesus had but told her one thing, namely, her adulterous state; but in her view, this included her apprehension that he knew her whole life. But what was infinitely yet more important, Jesus had told her who he was; and this the Lord accompanied with

such conviction to her heart, that she at once believed to the saving of her soul. Here was the grand discovery. This, in her instance, and the same in every other, is the first and last, and ultimate end of all knowledge. To use our Lord's own words: "This is life eternal, to know the only true God: and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." For in the revelation of the person of Christ to the soul, and the redemption by Christ, connected with it, the Church of God in every individual member receives all that we can receive here in grace, and hereafter in glory. And in this knowledge of the Lord, we find continual knowledge of, and communion with, the whole persons of the GODHEAD, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

As this is the leading point, and by far the most momentous in the whole history of this woman's confession, I would beg the attention of my readers to it in a way and manner suited to its high importance. And in order that we may have the clearest apprehension of it, I would recal to his recollection, the very gracious method our adorable Lord was pleased to adopt through the whole of his discourse with this Samaritan woman, prior to the discovery of himself, in order (as it should seem) to shew that this was all along the great object for which he had begun the conversation; namely, the revelation of himself. And the same is remarkable in all the interesting records of Christ in the gospel. Thus in the first interview of Nathaniel with the Lord Jesus. When Philip, to whom Christ had made himself known, related to Nathaniel concerning Christ, he expressed his knowledge of the Lord to him in these words: "We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth." And when this Israelite questioned the reality, Philip did by him as the woman of Samaria did by her countryman; he said, "Come

and see!" And when the Lord Jesus on his approach to him told Nathaniel whom he was, and where he had been, and that he saw him before that Philip called him, when he was under the fig-tree; convinced as the woman at the well was of the GODHEAD of Christ, he instantly exclaimed: "Rabbi! thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel." (John i. 43—49.) Similar events we find in the history of the man whose eyes Christ had opened. (John ix. 35—38.) The Æthiopian in the desert." (Acts viii. 37.) Observe, the whole stress of the revelation made in all these instances by the Lord; and the confession which followed in their faith of the Lord, was of the Lord's person. For this was *then* as it is *now*, considering the Lord Jesus Christ, as the one glorious object of faith; here is the *cause;* and not from any thing wrought in the mind; for these are all but *effects.*

And the scriptural account of this discovery of the person of Christ, as the sum and substance of all vital godliness; and the first and great compendium of all faith; is plainly shewn, in that he and he only, is the visible Jehovah, in the knowledge of whom (as hath been before observed) all that the church can have in a way of communion with the holy Three in One, which bear record in heaven, must consist: "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily." (Col. ii. 9.) So that in knowing him *spiritually*, when the eyes of our understanding are enlightened; we know all that we can know of the grace and manifestations of Jehovah in his Trinity of persons to the church in and through him. And very blessedly we then enter, under the same divine teaching, into an apprehension both scripturally and spiritually of the love of Jehovah to our persons as we are in Christ. For if we are chosen and adopted, and accepted, and gifted with grace here, and glory

hereafter; all these and every other, are, as we are in Christ; and our believing views of those blessings in the life that now is; and our enjoyment of them in open vision, in that life which is to come; are all in the person of our most glorious Lord. We are taught that it is "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Eph. i. 6.)

But we must not stop here. In order yet more to have a right apprehension of the infinite preciousness of the knowledge of our glorious Lord's person; we must consider that all that follows this knowledge in a way of enjoyment in spiritual and eternal things, wholly arises from Christ himself; and is no otherwise valuable than as beheld, received and enjoyed in him. And here is indeed the culminating point of all blessedness, in having all blessings in him; and he himself the blessing of blessings. For this is more than all gifts, all graces, all happiness; yea, all heaven, and all the felicities of heaven. For all that the Lord bestows, in a way of love and favour, is the result of that love and favour to our persons, but it is not himself. Hence therefore while we have all that infinite wisdom can contrive; all that infinite affection can bestow; all that infinite power can accomplish; it is not enough to say that in those love-tokens of our most glorious Lord, we shall have all that the most enlarged faculties of our renewed nature at the new birth can desire or conceive; but we have Christ himself. For as the Lord said to Abraham; so in effect doth the Lord say to all Abraham's seed: "Fear not; I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward." (Gen. xv. 1.)

And *lastly*, to add no more; for I must be brief: which makes this view of our most glorious Christ most completely glorious and blessed indeed, is the consideration that what the Lord Jesus Christ is to

*one* of his mystical members, he is to *all;* for they are all one in Christ Jesus. The highest saint in the church above, or the humblest redeemed one in the church below; both alike are, what they are, in Christ; and have not contributed an atom of their own to the attainment of such rich mercy. So that they who from slender apprehensions of divine things can say but little of themselves in a way of improvement, are as truly the objects of Christ's love, and as fully received into Christ's arms, as the more strong and spiritual. And for this plain reason; because the whole is *given,* not *merited;* the whole is from what Christ is, and not what we are. The charter of redemption runs in these words: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done; but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus iii. 5—7.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him, for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

"So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.

"And many more believed on him, because of his own word;

"And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him our selves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." (John iv. 39—42.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

And thus is closed the wonderful narrative of the woman of Samaria! Who should have conceived from an incident so trivial, as her fetching water for her family, that events so infinite and important would result. Not only the conversion of the woman of Samaria herself, but the conviction also of many of the city. And who shall say to what multitudes the relation hath been blessed from that time to the present, through the many intermediate ages of the church, among whom God the Holy Ghost hath caused the sweet Scripture to be sent.

Let not the reader dismiss the subject until that he hath first taken another leisurely survey of the whole; and looking up for divine teaching, hath done as the bee doth by the flower, bring home the sweets of it, to make honey for her provender; so let him take home the Scripture from the word of God to his heart, and continually meditate on the many gracious portions for his spiritual sustenance in Christ, which are here abounding from day to day. And above every other view, let him continually feast his soul on the person and grace, and tenderness, and compassion of our most glorious Christ. How lovingly is the Lord here set forth in his divine character as the Saviour of the world; like another Rahab in Jericho; so this adultress in Samaria became the object of his salvation. And let him not fail to connect with this view of the Lord Jesus, the assurance that the same grace which led him then to Samaria, is now unceasingly acting in the spiritual visits he is making to his people, "to seek and save them that are lost." For he is, and must, and everlastingly will be, the "same Lord Jesus Christ, yesterday, to day, and for ever."

When he hath feasted his soul on the glories of

Christ's person; and the infinite fulness and Almightiness of his salvation; let him learn how to form a right judgment of his own personal interest in Christ, by testimonies similar to which were here shewn, and such as followed in the vast change the sovereign grace of Christ wrought on the woman of Samaria. She left her water-pots; she hastened to communicate to all she knew, that she had found Christ; she gave the most incontestible evidence of his GODHEAD, by declaring that he had told her "all things that ever she did." And not content with proclaiming his name, and sending them for their own conviction, she did more; she accompanied them to Christ. Her language was not, *Go* to him for yourselves; but *Come!* and then say "Is not this the Christ?" Such will be your conduct; if like her you have found him; and like her, can and do testify, that from his grace in your heart, he is the Son of God. It is among the truest testimonies of the renewed heart, when the change wrought upon ourselves we long to see wrought on others. "The fathers to the children to make known the Lord's truth." And though a father cannot give his children grace; yet he can bring them under the means of grace; and if he knows himself the joyful sound, his mouth cannot but speak out of the abundance of the heart, to proclaim what the Lord hath done for his soul.

I only add, the Lord bless his word to his people, that the language of every redeemed and regenerated child of God may be, to say with the Samaritans, as they did to the woman: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

# THE

# POOL OF BETHESDA.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"After this, there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

"Now there is at Jersualem by the sheep-market, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

"In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, and withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

"For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water; whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." (John v. 1—4.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I ADMIRE the very gracious manner in which this miracle of our most glorious Lord is introduced. It brings with it some relation of Christ's person. Yes! his person is infinitely greater than all his work. His glory more than all that concerns the welfare of his people. The sweet and interesting records which are given to us by the Holy Ghost, concerning Christ, are *first*, of his glorious person, and *then* of his love, to his church and people. So the Lord Jesus himself, describes the Almighty agency of the Lord the Spirit. "He shall glorify me,'

said Christ; that is the first object God the Holy Ghost hath in view in his divine ministry. And then it is added: "for he shall receive of mine; and shall shew it unto you." (John xvi. 14.)

We are called upon therefore, as we mark the several features of this miracle, to behold our most glorious Christ, in his divine person, going up to Jerusalem, to a feast of the Jews. It is very likely that this feast was the feast of the passover; and for this reason, John hath marked, with great precision and exactness, the several passovers which Christ observed during his divine ministry. There were but four passovers, while our Lord was upon earth, in substance of our flesh. John hath very particularly noticed three of them in order; and it is not probable that he would have omitted one that must have happened in due course of time about this period. And supposing this to have been one; then the whole four will stand as they are placed in his gospel. The first is related John ii. 13. This follows. The third we have mentioned. (John vi. 4.) And the last, John xiii. 1. It is very interesting to observe, how the Son of God, when upon earth, honoured the temple with his presence. And surely the Lord of life and glory is not less attentive now, in the day of his power. And every regenerated child of God may with full assurance of faith take to himself this blessed conviction, that his spiritual presence is always the same in all public ordinances of the gospel, according to his own promise, that "wheresoever two or three of his people are gathered together in his name: there, (said the Lord Jesus,) am I in the midst of them." (Mat. xviii. 20.) For my own part, I never allow myself to question the matter. It is in my apprehension, one fixed certain truth. I would not be found as those men of old were, who came with an evil design to seek for the Lord Jesus; when they spake

among themselves as they stood in the temple: "What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?" (John xi. 55, 56.) Not so, should any of Christ's little ones be found, who seek his face for the love they bear him. They should never admit a state of doubt and suspense concerning him: his language is, "Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." (Mat. xxviii. 20.) Jesus therefore must be present. His love constrains him to it. His whole heart is with his people. And every ordinance and means of grace, is purposely instituted to open and keep open, a perpetual communion and fellowship with them; and they in him, and through him, with all the persons in the GODHEAD. Indeed, what is a throne of grace for, but that all his redeemed ones may come to him with holy confidence and joy? Very sweetly the Holy Ghost taught Paul so to assure the church: "Seeing then," said he, "that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 14—16.)

Concerning this pool of Bethesda, we have but a very slender account of it. Some have thought that it is the same or part of the same, by one communicating with the other, as the pool of Siloam, which we read of in John ix. 7. Certain it is, that both were for purposes of a special nature. The very name of Bethesda is significant, meaning the house of mercy. And it must have been a house of peculiar mercy: for the pool itself possessed a miraculous quality of healing. Not as some have supposed from the water's being impregnated with what flowed into them from the blood of the sacrifices offered in the temple; for

then the healing would have been very general: yea, universal, whereas we are told that it was limited to a very narrow extention.

I detain the reader, to one or two observations, before we go farther. It is very blessed to observe the special signification of names, places, persons, and characters; as marked in the Scripture of God. Jacob's Bethel, the house of God; and this poor man's Bethesda, the house of mercy; both were memorials of one and the same thing, namely, the Lord's grace manifested to the Lord's people. And we have authority to say, that Jacob to his dying day, never lost sight of Bethel; for he spake of it in his farewell blessing to his children: "The angel," said Jacob, "which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads, and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." (Gen. xlviii. 16.)

And Moses also, at the command of God, wrote a memorial in a book of the Lord's deliverance of Israel from Amalek. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi; For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." (Exod. xvii. 14—16.) But what is still more important for us to remark is this; that the Lord himself not only countenanced those acts of his servants in recording his mercies; but took to himself some new name upon several occasions of renewed blessings; as if to shew the pleasure the Lord hath in the prosperity of his people. We have a remarkable history in proof, of what the Lord Jesus said concerning the great deliverance he wrought for his people: Behold the days come saith the Lord, that

they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. But, The Lord liveth, which brought up, and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I have driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land." (Jer. xxiii. 7, 8.) And yet more; the very gracious and familiar manner in which the Lord hath made himself known to his people, after his first revelation to them, when in any of the future events of their history, he directs their minds back to the consideration of those love-tokens of his favour. Thus to *Jacob*, more than *twenty* years after his first revelation of himself to him at Bethel, the Lord put him in mind of it upon a renewed occasion, in proof of his unchangeable love toward him; when he said; "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me." (Gen. xxxi. 13.) As if the Lord would claim an old acquaintance with the patriarch. And whereas the Lord upon the first interview with the patriarch, had changed his name from Jacob to Israel; at a future meeting which took place, the Lord dropped the name of Jacob, and called him Israel. (Gen. xxxv. 13.) And I doubt not but the pool of Bethesda became as dear and sacred to this poor man, because the Lord healed him there, as Jacob's Bethel. And most probably he was known; and his designation in his day was, The man healed at the Pool of Bethesda. And such is it in the present hour. As the Lord hath promised to give a new name to his people, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. (Isa. lxii. 2.) So the Lord delighteth to call them by this name, in confirmation whose they are, and to whom subject of this memorial of names and places: in all the departments of nature, providence, and grace, will be brought forth in the great day of God, when in one entire and full

view, the whole proceedings of Jehovah in his Trinity of persons, towards his people will be unfolded: and all the Bethels, and Bethesdas; of all the Jacobs and Israels, in all generations of the church, shall be brought before a congregated world; and that ascription of praise and glory will burst forth from every heart of the Lord's people: "Great and marvellous are thy works Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

What a distressing picture is here presented to us, of those five porches, or colonades, filled with the several objects of misery, sickness, and woe, which are the sad consequences of our fallen nature. How verified are all the truths of Scripture which from age to age have been set forth in such awful exhibitions as are here described. And let it be observed that it was not one, or two, or ten, or twenty; but a great multitude. So that those five porches were filled with them. And the history is particular to remark the variety of their maladies: impotent, blind, halt, withered! Alas! what troops of diseases the frail flesh of fallen man is heir to! And what a solemn Scripture the Holy Ghost hath given of the whole cause: "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.) No doubt, as the pool was known to possess this healing quality, all that could take advantage of it, repaired to the spot. But though those five porches received all that came, as far as their limits would afford; yet it is more than probable that there were many in the neighbourhood which could not get there. Such at least is the case respecting other places, if not Jerusalem: for the whole world, in this point of view, is but as one vast hospital of human woe.

Let the reader pause over the solemn representation; for it is indeed truly solemn. Let him spiri-

tualize the subject, as it may be supposed to make an appeal to himself. Let him consider, whether he hath ever had a real sense of his impotency, and blindness; his halt, and withered state of mind, as all men are, by original and actual transgression. Not in disease of the body, but in the sin of the soul; not merely maladies which affect the present life, and if remaining uncured, terminate in death; but which have reference to another world, and which we bring with us into being; and which if we depart with, unhealed by the Lord Jesus Christ, produce that state so awfully described in Scripture, "the second death." (Rev. xx. 14.) Let the reader duly ponder the subject!

There is somewhat very significant in the account given of this angel or messenger, at "a certain season, troubling or agitating the water;" by which it possessed a miraculous quality of the Lord's appointment in healing one diseased person; the first who stepped in as soon as the agitation of the water was made. A great variety of opinions have been offered upon this part of the subject; it would lead however, much beyond the limits here to be observed, even but to enumerate them. It will be sufficient for our purpose to make one or two remarks on what seems to have been the most obvious design the Holy Ghost intended the church of God should gather from the history.

The reader will take notice, that the gospel was uniformly set forth in the prophecies of the Old Testament under the similitude of fountains, pools, rivers, and streams of water. (Isa. xxxv. 6, 7. xliii. 20, 21. Ezek. xlvii. 1—10. Zech. xiv. 8, 9, &c.) Those Scriptures may serve to shew the connection between the Old Testament prophecies, and the New Testament account of this pool of Bethesda. And that it should have continued till the days of our

most glorious Christ, with this limited operation, is another striking particularity. And the certain season, when it operated only, and that by the descent of an angel, evidently meant to prove that it was simply an ordinance, and no more. The descent of the angel being necessary to its agitation; and the being confined in its healing to only one person at the season, very loudly testified, what all the ordinances and means of grace declare; that however in great mercy of the Lord's appointment, they are; yet they all depend for success on the Lord's blessing.

But we must not stop here: The pool of Bethesda, had a typical meaning, in reference to the person of our most glorious Christ. He himself was, and is, the fountain which God the Holy Ghost, by his servant the prophet, declared should be open in the gospel church, in the latter dispensation: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." (Zech. xiii. 1.) And that it was, and is, to the person of our most glorious Christ, this Scripture pointed, and not to any mere ordinance of the gospel, is evident from what follows in a subsequent verse; where we find the Lord of hosts calling upon the sword of justice to awaken and sheath itself in Christ. "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn my hand upon the little ones." (Zech. xiii. 7.) Here therefore, we behold the real fountain for sin and for uncleanness is the Lord himself; "which is opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness."

I pray the reader to pause over the wonderful and mysterious subject. And sure I am, if the Lord be his teacher, he will behold in the person of our most

glorious Christ, all and every ordinance summed up in him. Christ's blood is the sole fountain that cleanseth from all sin. It is his blood, and his blood alone, cleanseth from the guilt of sin; from the filth of sin; from the condemnation of sin. It is neither prayers nor tears, neither ordinances, nor means of grace; the sole laver for sin and for uncleanness, is the blood of Christ. It answers against all the accusations of sin; all the demands of justice; all the terrors of a broken law; it is a speaking blood, which speaketh to God of the infinite glories of his person, who hath shed it; and it speaketh from God, of mercy and peace in the blood of his cross. And hence when John, in vision, beheld the church of God around the throne, they were said to have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 14.)

And as a farther confirmation of it, that this fountain of Christ's blood is himself; it is observable that its divine efficacy is not limited, as the pool of Bethesda was, to the cure of one, at the moving of the water: for all the Lord's people are included in this high administration. The language of our most glorious Christ is: "All that the Father hath given me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John vi. 37—40.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

"When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?" (John v. 5, 6.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It is very probable that this poor man was well known; for by his long infirmity, he must have attracted the occasional attention of the people of the city. And as he had, no doubt, been often at the pool, without succeeding in the obtaining of a cure; his continual disappointment had rendered him the greater object of pity. Hence he is spoken of under the character of a certain man; a well known diseased man. And his infirmity, let it have been what it might, was not only remarkable in point of his helplessness, but for the duration; namely, "thirty and eight years." A long time of suffering. What millions die without ever attaining such an age! And it is not said how long his life had run before this infirmity came upon him. It is but a short relation given of this man's history, only of his long sickness; but it is a very instructive one. Many there are that have been so favoured of the Lord, as scarcely to have known what sickness means in themselves, during that period. It were well had the healthy in body grace rightly to value those mercies, and to mark the distinguishing nature of them, when they behold others labouring under acute sufferings. But the blessings which are of a negative kind; I mean, such as include the absence of evil, are seldom appreciated by us as they ought.

The particulars of the cure the Lord Jesus wrought on the man, are very highly interesting, and merit to be noticed one by one. We are directed first to observe, that he caught the eye of our compassionate Lord: Jesus saw him lie, it is said. Let not the reader overlook that here, as in all other instances, it was Christ first looking on him; and not he looking to Christ. And moreover; though such multitudes of the diseased were there as well as this man, all alike waiting the troubling of the waters; yet the Lord singled him out from the whole. No doubt, the moment the Lord Jesus did so, in taking notice particularly of him, every eye was at once fixed on Christ, waiting the result of the event. And I hope my reader hath not now to learn the very sweet, special, and peculiar sweetness of personal and distinguishing mercies. The Holy Ghost by Solomon, hath given a very blessed Scripture upon it; when saying, "That thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee." (Prov. xxii. 19.) But the most striking particularity to be observed by us in this history, is what is said of the Lord Jesus knowing that the poor man had been a long time in that case. Here the Lord testified by this his eternal power and GODHEAD. For on the supposition that the man had been with this infirmity from his birth; then would he have been seven or eight years labouring under it, before the Son of God became incarnate; and who less than God could have had this knowledge? I pray the reader not to pass away from this part of the Scripture record until he hath blessed the Lord for giving by the way, such a manifestation of his omniscience. And if peradventure any of the Lord's afflicted ones, should be among my readers, while under any disease or suffering, in either body or mind; I would affectionately recommend them to take with this view of our most

glorious Christ, this certain assurance also; namely, that our Lord knows all the circumstances of their warfare; both the nature of their sorrows, and the pressure of them. He it is indeed that measures them out; weighs them all as in a balance. He it is that supports his people under them, and tenderly sympathizeth with them, while they are passing through the ordeal. And as a refiner and purifier of silver, the Lord suffers not the fire of the furnace to be heated above what they are able to bear; but when turning his hand (as the Lord speaks by the prophet) "upon his people, and purely purging away their dross, and taking away all their tin:" (Isa. i. 25.) He it is that carries them through all, and will bring them out of all, and bring them home to himself; like the precious ore, purified and refined, seven times in the fire.

But we must not stop here: The Lord Jesus did not simply look on the poor man, singling him out from the group, but knowing both the length and depth of his disease; and having directed his steps thither to those cloisters of Bethesda, purposely for his cure; the Lord immediately added to that look, and that knowledge, as a preparatory means to the exercise of his mercy, he spake to him; Jesus saith unto him; "Wilt thou be made whole?" This question, I should apprehend, was not put to the man as if there could be a doubt of his willingness to be healed; for not only the long duration of his disease, but also his laying before the pool, decidedly manifested how much he longed for it. But the inquiry of our Lord, seems to have been intended to call up the man's attention to the person of our most glorious Christ. The miraculous cure the Lord Jesus was about to perform on him was meant, not only in mercy to him, but to give a demonstration to all around, of his Almighty character, who came to "heal the broken

hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind: to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke iv. 18, 19.) And the method of the Lord Jesus, immediately after questioning the man, and receiving his answer, evidently manifested the cause for which he previously asked him; whether he would be made whole? In the cure the Lord was now about to perform; a line was drawn between ordinances of every kind and character, and the Lord God of his ordinances. From the pool of Bethesda, the Lord Jesus would hereby call his church to the knowledge of himself; and by such a palpable demonstration, shew to all the generations of his people, that though the Lord was pleased in numberless instances to work by means, yet was he not confined to means. The waters of Bethesda, were intended to keep alive in the minds of the Lord's people, the expectation of the Lord God of those waters. And the necessity of their being moved by the descent of an angel, before they could prove medicinal for healing; and that healing indeed but to a single person; as plainly manifested that even then, a supernatural and miraculous power was necessary to give them efficacy. But when the Lord of life and glory came, the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings, the eyes and hearts, and affections of the Lord's people, as "the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel were to be towards the Lord." (Zech. ix. 1.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

"Jesus saith unto him: Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

"And immediately the man was made whole; and took up his bed and walked: and the same day was the sabbath." (John v. 7—9.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

A GREAT variety of very interesting particulars arise out of this short conversation between our glorious Lord, and his poor patient. Jesus had said to him: "Wilt thou be made whole?" But it is evident from his answer, that he was looking to no other source for healing than the waters of Bethesda. I beg the reader not to overlook this; for it is one of the most endearing points in the history. He knew not Christ at that time. And nothing, as is evident from his answer, could have been more remote from his thoughts, than that the Person who was thus kindly speaking to him, and had noticed his misery, had the power to cure him without the waters of the pool. And such is it in a spiritual sense, when first the sinner convinced of his misery by transgressions, attends on ordinances, in the expectation of salvation from them. Christ is unknown. Christ is hid from his view. And like this poor man, the distressed creature considers that it is the want of help in others to put him into the waters; or the not being so much alive and in earnest as others, that many find help before him. But this is not all. This impotent man was not only at this time unconscious of the Person of Christ; or of any possible cure but from the waters; but he expressed a sense of his poverty, in the not having any friendly hand to help him in season. And as he had been long in the

affliction, and no doubt had often attended before ineffectually, he might have been prompted to give over what hitherto had proved a vain pursuit. But not so. Though he complained of the want of friends, and the prospect appeared dark and unpromising; yet still he waited, and did not seem willing from what he said, to relinquish his expectation. Here, spiritually considered, is a very sweet and interesting picture of a soul convinced of sin, waiting for salvation; and assured by a certain somewhat he feels of encouragement that the blessing will come; he still waits on the ordinances. Now this humble waiting is among the most striking evidences of the Lord's working upon the heart. The Lord is throwing in unseen succours within; when like a garrison besieged things are distressing without. Hence the Lord saith by the prophet: "It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." (Lament. iii. 26.)

And let the reader take with him one observation more, intimately connected indeed with what was remarked before; but still rising in magnitude and importance, from the view it holds forth; namely, how very blessedly by such a divine process, the Lord both manifests and magnifies the sovereignty of his grace, demonstrating that all his ordinations result from the pleasure of his will; and that he will not be accountable to any of his creatures. The mind of the apostle was blessedly led out in this contemplation; when under the Lord the Spirit's teaching, he said: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. v. 9.) And hence to the same church, he wrote to the same amount, in his second epistle: "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the

Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. ii. 13.) When Paul thus expressed himself, in both these scriptures, he contemplated the certain safety of the church, because, by whatever arrangement, according to the divine ordination the individual members of Christ's mystical body were to be brought home: the thing was certain in the instance of each, and in the instance of all. The Lord hath appointed them from everlasting to salvation. That forms the basis of security for their effectual call in time. How it should be accomplished was not in the inquiry of Paul. Neither when, nor where; these formed no bar, no clog, nor difficulty in Paul's creed. This was in the Lord's divine agency, and not in man's contrivance. And as such, the issue could never be doubtful.

I beg the reader to ponder well this part of the subject. Depend upon it, in all the events relating to the church of our most glorious Christ from first to last; all, and every iota is marked with a precision that nothing can improve, nothing can arise to counteract or prevent. Every thing is so arranged and marshalled in that everlasting covenant that is "ordered in all things and sure;" so as to make all subsequent events to minister to, and to subserve the ancient and eternal purposes, which were purposed in Christ Jesus, before the world began. This poor man at Bethesda, had long waited fruitlessly, because the cure was reserved for the personal glory of Christ. Hence, though waiting long at the pool, the waters of the pool were to have no ministry in his healing. And the same is in every instance of the Lord's people. The whole election of grace are so many witnesses of it. The Lord having chosen them to salvation; and then their salvation was so appointed as to minister to the accomplishment. They were none of them called into being, and called to such states and exercises, and then chosen to sal-

vation; but chose to salvation, and every event that followed, whether from long waiting or early calling, so ordered, as the more fully to minister to the divine glory, and their everlasting welfare. Hence that Scripture: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son; that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Rom. viii. 29, 30.)

Let us now observe the Lord's answer: "Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole; and took up his bed and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath." (John v. 8, 9.) The sovereignty of our most glorious Christ which he manifested upon this occasion merits our closest regard. Here was no means used. No pool for the cripple to have recourse to. The same Almighty power that at the creation of nature only said: "Let there be light, and there was light:" at this renewal of the power of nature, spake but the word and instant health followed. But let the reader figure to his imagination what effects must have taken place in the countenances of the surrounding multitude. How lessened to their esteem must then have appeared the waters of the pool! How striking an evidence of distinguishing mercy; that amidst so many helpless impotent creatures, that this was the only one to whom the Lord then manifested his Divine power and Godhead in healing. And how must every eye have been fastened on the man when they saw him, who before had been unable to move: and for the long period of thirty and eight years, had been under such deplorable circumstances, now at a word speaking, carrying his bed and walking! And yet more than

beholding the man, how must they have gazed on the glorious person of our most glorious Christ!

But did not the whole troop of the diseased that were then lying in the cloisters of Bethesda, when they saw the miracle which Jesus had done; did they not all with one voice cry unto him to be made alike partakers of his mercy? We hear of no such thing; no, not in a single instance! And did the Lord Jesus heal none but this man? It is more than probable that the Lord did not, for no notice is taken, either of any applying, or of any other at that time being cured. And doth not the reader enter into a right apprehension of the cause? If the Lord be his teacher, he will not be far from the discovery.

In the first place, let it be duly pondered, that the great purpose for which the Lord of life and glory directed his steps to the cloisters of Bethesda, for the healing of this sick man, had a special reference to him; and no less in relation to the pool itself. The miraculous quality these waters possessed for the cure of disease, after the descent of the angel; and limited but to one; evidently proclaimed the intention the Holy Ghost had thereby, to keep the minds of the Lord's people in expectation of the Lord's coming. When therefore the Lord Jesus Christ came; and by his own sovereign act of grace, healed this poor man by a word speaking, without the use of the pool: here the prophet's description of Christ, became completely fulfilled. (Isa. xxxv. 4—6.)

But *secondly:* The Lord, by healing this man, and him only, very blessedly taught, and in a practical manner also, the great doctrine of his holy gospel—distinguishing grace. And as he had so blessedly set forth, and in his first sermon in the Jewish synagogue; here was given an illustration of it: "But I tell you of a truth, Many widows were in Israel, in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three

years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land: But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel, in the time of Eliseus the prophet: and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." (Luke iv. 25—27.)

And *thirdly:* The conduct of the impotent folk in the porches of Bethesda, carried with it an exact resemblance to the uniform rejection which the Lord Jesus sustained in the days of his flesh, from all that were not brought under the divine influence. It is not to be accounted for on any other principle whatever, that diseased persons beholding such a miracle as this was; of one in their midst, and whose malady had been extended to so long a period, instantly made whole by a word speaking; but would have been clamorous to an excess, to the obtaining like mercy. We might have expected to have seen the whole of them with one voice calling upon Christ; and never giving over the call, while the least hope remained of being heard and answered. But not so: The natural atheism of the human heart against Christ, was the same then as it is now. And what the Lord Jesus said to the infidels in the days of his flesh, is equally applicable in this day of his power: "Why do ye not understand my speech: Even because ye cannot hear my word." (John viii. 43.)

But we must not stop here: For *fourthly,* it may be observed, that even in those cases where the Lord healed numbers in body, the same prejudice still remained to any spiritual apprehension of Christ in their soul. We have a very striking illustration of this in the case of the lepers the Lord cured in his way to Jerusalem, when passing through Samaria: "And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go, shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." (Luke xvii. 12—19.)

I pass over, for the sake of shortness, making any observation on the Lord's commanding those lepers to go to shew themselves to the priests, which was in conformity to the law; (Lev. xiv. 2, 3.) and might be supposed not altogether without analogy to the waters of Bethesda, as a means of grace. The object for which I have referred to the history of those men, is on the subject of grace. And nothing can more strinkingly define the distinguishing properties of it. The Samaritan, who was healed, felt with his cure, a spiritual apprehension of the person of Christ. He had learned enough of the Jewish Scripture to know that the cure of the leprosy was the sole prerogative of God. He was healed by Christ; and he at once concluded that Christ was God. Hence he returned to give thanks, falling on his face before all that were present, glorifying Christ as God. And conscious now that the law which restrained the leper from entering the city, was in his instance done away, he came near the feet of Jesus: and in this lowly and affectionate manner, testified to the GODHEAD of Christ, and to the mercy he had received from him.

Neither is this all: For our Lord's own words upon the occasion yet more fully display the special

act of distinguishing grace: "Were there not ten, (said the Lord,) cleansed?" Yes! in body, all. But only this one in soul. For the other nine had only sought a cure for their leprosy; and having obtained this, they desired nothing more. This Samaritan, it is probable, at the first, had only sought the same. But when the poor creature found that while going only to the priest, and before he arrived there, he obtained the blessing; and convinced, no doubt by divine influence entering his heart, and curing him of the leprosy of the soul, he needed no more to go in quest of the Jewish priests or sacrifices under the law; he came to Christ, the author and finisher of his salvation. Hence like the multitude of diseased beings, in the cloisters of Bethesda; or those Jewish lepers, while remaining unconscious of Christ, never seek grace from Christ to the deliverance of their maladies. Nine lepers, or nine thousand, when only healed in body, will rise from cloisters, or beds of sickness, as they lay down, unconscious of the hand that healeth them. But every truly awakened sinner, who not only labours under the infirmity of the body, but is led to see and know his greater infirmity of soul: when the Lord hath made him whole, will do as this Samaritan did, turn back, and with a loud voice, glorify God, for his unspeakable mercy.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day; it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.

"He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

"Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?

"And he that was healed, wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place." (John v. 10—13.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It should have been observed before, as it was recorded in the preceding verse to this Scripture, that it was the sabbath day when the Lord Jesus healed this cripple. And while I recal to the reader's recollection that circumstance, I would together with it, remark that many of our most glorious Christ's miracles were wrought on him on the sabbath day. As if the Son of God meant thereby to add a lustre to that holy day of the Lord, by such stupendous acts of grace and mercy, as might demonstrate his own eternal power and Godhead; and prove that He himself was to all his people the very sabbath of the soul. And as he said to the Pharisees upon a former occasion, when they would have reproved his disciples for plucking the ears of corn, and eating them on the sabbath: "I say unto you, (said Jesus,) that in this place is one greater than the temple." (Matt. xii. 1—6.) If the reader wishes to note some of the miracles Christ wrought on the sabbath, he will find several in those Scriptures. (Matt. xii. 9—13. Luke xiii. 10—17. John ix. 13—16.)

But for the present, passing over this feature of character in our divine Lord; I would desire the reader to remark with me, the fastidiousness in those enemies of our most glorious Christ; and beg him very particularly to note how that enmity was marked. Under a pretended zeal for the sabbath, they cloaked themselves with this covering, which concealed the rancour boiling within; and as our Lord upon another occasion told them, "they paid tithe of mint and anise and cummin; while omitting the

weightier matters of the law; judgment, mercy, and faith." (Matt. xxiii. 23.) Scrupulous to a nicety in obeying the mere letter of the word; but total strangers to the vital and spiritual nature of it.

It would have been happy for the church, comparatively speaking, had this Pharisaical righteousness died, when the Pharisees of our Lord's generation died; but alas! in every generation, the brood hath been preserved; and being so very congenial to the natural pride of the human heart, swarms have sprung from the original stock, and have ceased not to send forth their progeny from age to age. And their characters when fully fledged, are uniformly so very captivating, that all the unregenerate, like themselves, are delighted with their plumage. Like those in the days of our Lord; they profess the highest reverence for the sabbath; attachment to what is called religious duties, public worship, and with some of them family prayer, attendance now and then on the sacrament, comparative statement of themselves with more openly profane; so that by thus walking upon stilts of their own creating, they hush all apprehensions asleep, as if there was no possibility of their not being in safety: and like the great progenitor of the stock our Lord so marked in the parable, their language is like his: "God I thank thee, that I am not as other men are; extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess." (Luke xviii. 11, 12.) And who shall count to what extent the numbers are, in the present awful day of a Christ despising generation, and under how fatal a delusion the great mass of the unregenerate live, and are lulled in this security; "speaking Peace, peace, when there is no peace."

The answer of the poor man to the reproaches of those self-righteous persons in our Lord's day is very

striking: "He that made me whole," said he, "the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk." It was an unanswerable argument to justify the act, both of carrying his bed and walking, when he that had so miraculously wrought the cure, had commanded him to do both. Besides, it was a palpable demonstration of the reality of his being healed. "Thirty and eight years," and perhaps well known to the whole inhabitants of Jerusalem, had this poor cripple been impotent and helpless, and now he is in a moment enabled both to carry his bed and walk. What but the most determined perverseness could have induced any to call in question the Almightiness of him by whom this act was wrought? And who but the sworn foes of Christ, could have hesitated in the conviction, that the same Lord who appointed the sabbath, had here honoured the sabbath by such sovereignty as manifested his own eternal power and GODHEAD? And as the Lord very blessedly observed upon another occasion, when he sent the Pharisees to their own law, as written by the prophet Hosea, vi. 6. "Go ye," said Jesus, "and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice. If ye had known what this meaneth, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day." (Matt. ix. 13. and xii. 7, 8.) And let not the reader fail to observe, to what an extent of operation would this daring remonstrance of the Jews have led, had it been for a moment admissible. For the same reason which they urged, (and under the garb of reverence too, for the sabbath) for the man's not carrying his bed when healed in his body, held equally good, when the Lord at any time cured the paralysis of the soul. So that those professed orthodox men, whose veneration for the sabbath took offence at the lesser, what would they have said had they seen, or could they know, the numberless acts of our most glorious Christ, which

he is continually carrying on in the greater? Oh! thou gracious Lord of the sabbath! how doth my very soul leap within me, when I behold thee spiritually by the eye of faith doing now on the sabbath in the days of thy power, what thou didst then in the days of thy flesh, in the Jewish synagogue; "healing broken hearts, giving deliverance to the captives, and restoring sight to the blind." (Luke iv. 18, 19.) Surely, all that know thy name among the lookers on, must rejoice, and all the daily receivers of thy grace on thy holy sabbaths, must dance with sacred joy in the contemplation of the innumerable cures of our God by the side of the gospel pool of Bethesda, and shout aloud with thanksgiving! Nay like the prophet, in every sabbath, and through the whole of the Lord's day, would I call upon the inanimate part of creation, to join in the sacred dance, and say, "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel." (Isa. xliv. 23.)

But we have not yet done with these ancient Pharisees, no nor will the church of our most glorious Christ, while she is in this wilderness, be ever delivered from the more modern ones, for their heresy is the same. When the cripple had thus justified himself in doing what he had done at the command of Him that so wonderfully had healed him: they were not the more satisfied, but questioned him still further: "Then asked they him, what man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk?" I pray the reader not to overlook several prominent features indicative of their character, and which, under all their pretended veneration for the sabbath, manifested their hatred to the Lord.

*First:* "What man (said they) is that which said

unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk?" The act itself had proved to the clearest demonstration, that he who had so healed by a word, was more than a mere man. And had they considered what the Scriptures of their own prophets had said, they might have read that such acts as Jesus had then wrought, were the very testimonies by which the Messiah should be known. For when he came, his name, it was said, should be "Emmanuel, God with us." (Isa. vii. 14. Isa. xxxv. 4—6.) Here is not a word said about the miracle which Christ had wrought. A man so well known in the city, by his long impotency and helplessness, and so miraculously restored to health and strength by a word speaking, and yet no acknowledgment of the greatness and graciousness of the deed by any of those Jews; but rather invidiously to lessen Christ in the poor man's esteem by such a question, as they wished him to consider Christ nothing more than a mere man like himself.

*Secondly:* Their question was directed with a greater invidiousness of evil both to Christ, and to the man the Lord hath healed. For if they could have satisfied him that Christ was but a man, they would have charged both Christ and his patient as sabbath-breakers, and therefore they intended to proceed on that ground, not allowing him for a moment to be any other than man. And the next step would have been to have criminated him by the law. (Nehem. xiii. 17, 18. Jer. xvii. 21, 22.) What an awful state of obduracy is the mind of every man hardened with by the fall! To use the strong language of the Lord by the prophet, to every fallen son of Adam, the words are the same: "Thou didst debase thyself, even to hell." (Isa. lvii. 9.)

But we feel a relief of soul from such horrid portraits of nature, which we are under the awful guilt of unregeneracy by passing on to the relation given of

the healed cripple in the next verse. To the invidious question of the Jews, What man his he? the poor man returned no answer: for it is said; "he that was healed wist not who it was, for Jesus had conveyed himself away; a multitude being in that place." Here a subject of much interest to the healed ones of the Lord's people opens before us, and which under divine teaching, cannot fail of inducing much comfort. Numbers are spiritually blessed in ordinances, by providences, and a great variety of methods in the Lord's stores of his grace and omnipotency; while they for a long time not unfrequently remain unconscious of the Almighty hand which worketh all. The Lord doth now in the present day of his power, as he did in the first ages of the church. And as Jacob, at Bethel, until he awoke out of his sleep, did not discern the Lord in the vision: so they wist not till afterwards their Deliverer, but then with him say: "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." (Gen. xxviii. 16.)

It is very blessed however, when the life of God is begun in the soul, to look back and trace, on numberless occasions, how the Lord was working on our mind and inducing feelings which at time we wist not like this man, from whence they came, but now behold the gracious and divine direction. Often in the early part of life, there have been visits and communications from the Lord, which for the moment have arrested the hearts; occasioned a certain undescribable feeling, but which have passed off again, and we hear no more of them, and yet in the after seasons of more pointed grace, and sometimes for years between, some renewed love-token of the Lord hath awakened the recollection of the former, and both have been productive of very blessed goings forth of soul to the Lord's praise.

And there can be no doubt, but that the interest

the Lord hath in his people; the everlasting love he hath invariably borne towards his people; his delights (as he said himself,) "being with them, when there were no depths, nor fountains abounding with water, and his goings forth, as their glorious Head and Husband, having been from everlasting." Surely, he then eyed them, watched over them for good, and had communion with him; yea, when they had no consciousness of communion with him; yea, had no conciousness of their own being, or their having been, from everlasting chosen in him. Oh! what discoveries will eternity have to unfold, when the church of our most glorious Christ will be brought "to see Him as he is, and to know even as they are known." But in the mean time, during a life of faith, it is blessed to be made acquainted from holy Scripture with the certainty of these divine truths, and to live in the full enjoyment of them by faith; being thereby assured, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the love of Christ and the affection and sympathy of Christ towards his own, whom the Father hath given him, were as great in the eternal state, before all worlds, as they have been, or can be now in time, or to all eternity. Nothing can add to, or take from, a love that is in itself infinite. And, therefore, when by regeneration, a child of God is brought to know the Lord; or (as Paul more properly states it) be known of the Lord; then the desire of the soul is, as Paul's was, and as he expresseth it, to "apprehend that for which also (said he) I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." (Philip. iii. 12.)

Though the subject proposed in this memoir, ended with the miracle; yet I must not close without observing, that when afterwards the Lord Jesus met his patient, as it is said in a following verse he did, in the temple, whither it may be supposed he went to give praises to the Lord; and our Lord reminded him of his being made whole, and cautioned him against the

commission of sin, lest a greater evil should come upon him; let it not be supposed, as if the Lord meant the sovereignty of his grace would be suspended, and the glorious display of his mercy would be recalled. Sin, in every instance of mankind, in consequence of the original fall of man, hath induced sickness, punishment, and sorrow. And it is sin in the root, the essence, the very being of our nature. And this is alike the same in all; however diversified it may be, in the variety of appearances. And as none but Christ can take away sin; neither any thing but the blood of Christ, cleanseth from all sin; without him, there is no healing. So express is that declaration of Scripture: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." (1 John i. 7.)

In conclusion, allow me to add, that the cloisters of Bethesda, crowded with the miserable objects and subjects of disease in body are striking emblems of the ordinances of the gospel: and which are graciously appointed for the reception of such as know and feel, by reason of sin, their own misery of soul. But as the descent of an angel, at a certain season, was absolutely necessary to give a sanative efficacy to the waters of the pool, so it is the presence of the Lord, in the assemblies of his people, which can alone render means of grace beneficial to his people. Here indeed the ordinances of the gospel differ from the pool of Bethesda; and manifest the superiority of the one to the other. The Lord limited the cure of the pool to certain seasons; and that not without the water being troubled; yea, and even then, confined to the cure of a single individual. But to all seasons, and to all times, the Lord hath extended the riches of his grace in his house of prayer; and not one, but many may be and through Almighty grace, frequently are, made whole, when the power of the Lord is present to heal.

Lord! be thou always present with them; and do

thou teach thy people, and instruct thy ministers, whom thou hast ordained to the service of the sanctuary, to whom to look for blessing; and from whom their expectation alone can be answered; that in looking through and beyond the ordinance, they may behold the God of ordinances, whose sole prerogative it is to say: "Fear not, I am thy salvation."

Ye that have long attended the ordinances of the gospel, without deriving (as in your apprehension you conclude) blessings from them, do not despond, neither give over. Look at this poor man, with his eight-and-thirty years perseverance; and observe at length the blessed issue. There can be no doubt but that the eye of the Lord Jesus had followed him, and watched over him, every step of the way in his eventful life. And such is the grace of the Lord Jesus to all his people now. "There is a set time to favour Zion." And when that time arrives, the past is but as a moment. The Holy Ghost, by James, gives a blessed direction to the church on this ground: "Behold, we count them happy which endure." But this is not according to man's estimation. Men of the world count them happy that do not endure. Affliction and sickness are not in their catalogue of good; but health, and wealth, and sensual enjoyments. "But," saith the Lord, "ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy;" or "as the margin renders it, full of bowels." (James v. 11.) And we have seen no less, at this pool, the same in this man. And so is it now, in all the gospel ordinances, where the Lord gives the blessing of his presence.

Precious Jesus! Cease not to manifest thy presence in all the assemblies of thy people. And to all the various maladies under which they labour; sinew-shrunk, and halt, and blind, and withered; as all are

by nature, until healed by sovereign grace, the same wretched objects of misery; let thy soul-reviving word go forth, as to this man; saying, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk;" and instantly the souls of thy people will be healed.

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THE

## LORD JESUS CHRIST MAKING HIS PUBLIC ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

### HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,

"Saying unto them: Go into the village over against you: and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.

"And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

"All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

"Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass." (Matt. xxi. 1—5.)

### NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The triumphant entrance of our most glorious Christ into Jerusalem, five days before his crucifixion, was considered in the esteem of God the Holy Ghost, so very important to the church, and so very expressive of the highest purposes, that the event was not only foretold under the spirit of pro-

phecy, five hundred years before it was to be accomplished, but that gracious God, the Spirit, caused it to be recorded by the whole of the evangelists; and handed it down and preserved the sweet and sacred relation of it, through a period of near two thousand years, to the present hour. And the same Almighty Author of Holy Scripture, who hath been thus gracious in giving, hath blessed it, and doth bless it, and will bless it, to the church in the reading and hearing of it, to the remotest time-state here upon earth, until all the events in the economy of grace to the church are accomplished; and the church herself is brought home to her Lord in glory.

The history is very affectionately introduced in the account, as stated in this Scripture; to which, once for all, let me observe, all the other evangelists bear like testimony. (See Mark xi. 1, &c. Luke xix. 29, &c. John xii. 14, &c.) We read, that when the Lord Jesus, and his little family, drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, he began the preparations for his entrance into the city. It should be observed that Bethphage and Bethany, so called, were villages, by reason of a few straggling houses, running one into the other; here and there scattered, as is very common in the present hour, in the suburds of large towns and cities; the whole together making eight furlongs; or a mile from the extreme point to Jerusalem. Here also in the road near Jerusalem, was situated that memorable mount, the mount of Olives; where David, as a type of our most glorious Christ, ages before, had gone up barefoot. (2 Sam. 15—30.) And where, according to the prophet, the Lord's feet shall again stand, when he goeth forth "against the nations in battle." (Zech. xiv. 4.)

There were many very significant circumstances attending this entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem,

which the reader will do well to observe. It was five days before Christ's death. Now the passover was on the fourteenth day of the month; and this consequently was the tenth. An exact correspondence took place, therefore, between the order at the institution of the passover, in setting apart the paschal lamb; and the Lamb of God, the real and true passover, which that paschal lamb signified. It is highly observable, that as the lamb for sacrifice was to be set apart four days before the Jewish service took place; so Christ, our passover, sacrificed for us, entered Jerusalem four days before his sufferings and death. (Exod. xii. 3.) And as the lamb in the camp of Israel, was to be a lamb of the first year, without blemish, and without spot; so Christ was declared by Pontius Pilate, in the very moment he pronounced sentence of death upon him, to be guiltless. For we read, that he "washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person." (Matt. xxvii. 24, 25.)

The Lord sending two of his disciples into the village, which was over against them, as they approached the city, to request the loan of an ass, with her colt; and over-ruling the minds of the owners to grant the favour desired; is no less observable. Both Mark and Luke enlarge on this part of the relation concerning the ass; namely, that it was one "whereon never man sat." And they particularly state also, that the Lord Jesus had told them of the very spot where they should find the ass, namely, "immediately on their entering the village." Here was a test of our Lord's omniscience. And no less, in the over-ruling the minds of the owners to the grant of the ass unto Christ, became as decided a proof of his eternal power and Godhead. For as the Lord had foreseen that a demand would be made on the disciples as they took the ass, as to what their

intention was; and so it proved. For it is said, that the disciples found the ass and colt, even as Jesus had foretold; and as they were loosing them from the place, the owners said, "What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said even as Jesus had commanded; and they let them go." I pause for the moment in this place just to observe, that amidst the poverty of our glorious Lord, who was thus constrained to bor row, what a display of sovereignty appeared! And very sweetly that Scripture comes in to our meditation in the comment upon it: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.)

But we must not stop here: For the most illustrious part of the history remains yet to be noticed. All the evangelists, with one voice, concur to tell the church the occasion of all this wonderful proceeding, with the marvellous events included in it: "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass." The prophet Zechariah, five hundred years before, had, being inspired by the Holy Ghost, given this prophecy, by way of preparing the minds of the Lord's people, for this auspicious event. And as it was big with importance, the prophet bid the church to welcome the Lord's coming, in the most rapturous terms: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion, and shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee, he is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." (Zech. ix. 9.) And by way of identifying the person of our glorious Lord, and to prove that to him, and to him alone, this prophecy

referred, it is remarkable that no other king ever, before or since, so entered Jerusalem. Indeed the features of his glorious person, and the poverty of his appearance, were never possible to have been blended in any one, but in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is described as Zion's king; but who, of kings, ever rode in triumph upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass? Of whom, among princes, and the great ones of the earth, could it ever have been said to have been meek and lowly? And yet infinitely more impossible to have added, having salvation! Let not the reader overlook such divine features of character; in the event of which, the present peace and everlasting happiness of the whole church of God is secured. Truly, to this amount, is that blessed testimony given by the apostle, when he said, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.)

I detain the reader to remark also, what a beautiful correspondence of what is here said by one prophet, concerning the person of our most glorious Christ, is given to the same amount by every other. Indeed what the Holy Ghost hath said by Zechariah, in this Scripture, as refered to by the evangelist, is uniformly the same as that of God the Father, by the prophet Isaiah: "Behold my servant whom I uphold: mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law." (Isa. xlii. 1—4.) And no

less of what was said by the Son of God himself, under the spirit of prophecy, in allusion to his advent, "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for lo, I come; and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee," (Zech. ii. 10, 11.) It is always blessed to behold with what a world of apparatus the whole volume of Scripture in the Old Testament, in every part, ushered in the Lord of life and glory, under the New. And what is more particularly to be regarded, how the whole concurred in dwelling upon those two grand features of character, by which the coming Saviour was to be known; namely, in the infinite greatness and underived dignity of his person, and the infinite greatness and all-sufficiency of his finished salvation. All bore their united testimony to this, as one of them expressed it, and all of them concurred, when he said: "Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." (Isa. xxxv. 4—6.) And had it been possible for either the writer or reader of this Scripture Extract to have been present when the Lord Jesus came in person, and walked about the streets of Jerusalem; could we have beheld him, while having the Scriptures of the prophets in our hand, and compared the portrait with the original, and while we read the one, have beheld the other; going about healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people; what would have been

the instant exclamation of each heart, but as the same truth was called forth from the centurion at the foot of the cross: "Truly, this was the Son of God!" (Matt. xxvii. 54; xxi. 6—9.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,

"And brought the ass and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.

"And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.

"And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying: Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matt. xxi. 6—9.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

There is somewhat of a special signification in the answer which the Lord Jesus bid his disciples give to the owners of the ass and colt; "The Lord hath need of them!" How was it that the Lord should need any thing of his creatures? And how was it that this needs-be of the Lord, should at once influence the minds of such as, it is more than probable, knew not the Lord, "straightway to send them?" The reader, (if he be a gracious reader,) will do well to make a suitable memorandum of these things. Some of the Lord's people have found peculiar sweetness in those Scriptures which direct the mind to look over persons and things, and behold, as the prophet did, in the complicated machine of apparent much confusion, One, in the likeness, as the appearance of a man, above upon it, guiding all. (Ezek. i. 26.)

Among many blessed portions in the word of God to this amount, I would refer the reader to those two, as very blessed samples of this most precious doctrine: Isa. xvi. 4; Prov. xvi. 7. The former is strikingly direct to the point. Moab was the sworn foe of Israel: but even Moab shall house, feed, and shelter the Lord's people, if the Lord find it necessary. And the latter is a general promise to the same gracious provision; and hath been confirmed in ten thousand instances to the people of God.

What a very lovely sight must it have been to have seen our most glorious Christ, amidst all the infinite greatness which we know him to have been possessed of in his Almighty power and GODHEAD: in his human nature thus meek and lowly, and as the prophet had described him, "riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass." Here were no external displays of rank and grandeur. The animals taken for our Lord's entry into Jerusalem were not the stately horse or proud steed, caparisoned with pompous trappings, but what is generally classed among the lower order of beasts for carriage, the dull and stupid ass. And a few loose garments of the poor disciples of the Lord, who had not where to lay his head, were thrown across his back, to bear the Son of God through the streets of Jerusalem. No heralds preceded the procession, nor any of the Jewish Sanhedrim, who, had they understood their own Scriptures, ought to have been the foremost to welcome the Lord's approach. But the Son of God's retinue was *then* as it is *now*—the few humble followers of the humble Lamb. Yet what was wanting on the part of man was abundantly compensated on the part of God. For we are told, that "a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and

that followed, cried, Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

Let the reader determine for himself, (and if he be under the Lord's teaching, he will form right judgment,) for I leave the question with him when I ask, what less than a divine afflatus from the Lord, could have induced such effects on the minds of the multitude? The common people, for the most part, are carried away with show and parade; but here was nothing of any outward splendour in the appearance of the Lord Jesus, to attract attention. And it was not a few, it seems, that were thus led to hail Christ under these distinguishing characters; "but a very great multitude." Surely, in the meek and lowly demeanour of the Lord Jesus, there was, (as the prophet had described him ages before,) "no form nor comeliness, neither any beauty that we should desire him." (Isa. liii. 2.) And yet we are told, that they saluted him with all royal honours; and not only cut down branches from the trees, but laid their garments also before the Lord in the way; as hath been done in all ages, when kings and emperors make their triumphal entrance into cities. (2 Kings ix. 13.) Nay, to carry yet stronger conviction that somewhat more than the mere impulse of natural affections induced these effects; the evangelist John, in his relation of this history, saith, that the same powerful direction was wrought in the minds of many in Jerusalem, before the Lord's arrival there. "Much people," saith John, "that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees," (as was the custom at the feast of tabernacles,) "and went forth to meet him: and cried," (as the others on the road had done,) "Blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord." (John xii. 13.) And what

source less than a divine source, could have excited such things?

But we must not stop here; we find joined with those acclamations of royal honour, ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ, were mingled praises to the divine purposes for which he came. The Hosannas repeatedly proclaimed, and the continued welcomes to Christ, as the Son of David, with "Hosanna in the highest;" these pointedly referred to the sacred mission for which Christ came; and the divine nature of his person, by whom alone salvation could be accomplished. The very special word Hosanna, is in itself, a decided testimony to the whole. For it is a compound of an Hebrew verb; signifying to save; and, being addressed to Christ, as plainly testifieth, that they that used it, whether they themselves were conscious that the Lord Jesus was the Christ the Messiah or not, considered that Christ would come for this purpose of salvation. And it is worthy the observation of the godly reader, that in that memorable psalm of prophesy, concerning Christ, part of which Peter in his sermon before the Jewish counsel quoted and directly referred to Christ; (compare Acts iv. 11, 12, with Psalm cxviii. 22, 23.) the very same ascriptions of hosanna and praises are there used, which are here given to Christ: "Save now, I beseech thee O Lord, O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord. We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord." (Psalm cxviii. 25, 26.)

We shall have occasion hereafter as we prosecute the history, to notice again somewhat farther on this subject. But I cannot even now pass from the consideration of it, until that I have first earnestly desired the reader to remark with me one most beautiful and important instruction which immediately presents itself to our view at our very entrance, on beholding those divine

and royal honours given to our most glorious Christ. Hitherto the Lord had suppressed all state and public manifestations of himself, who he was. He had upon a remarkable occasion withdrawn himself even from his public ministry, in working miracles and the like, "when he perceived that the multitude would come, and take him by force, to make him a king;" (John vi. 15) but now, within five days of his death, and when it became necessary to fulfil the predictions of the prophet Zechariah, who had so pointedly stated the shouts and rejoicings the daughter of Zion and Jerusalem should make, in beholding him as her king, coming unto her meek and lowly, and having salvation; the Son of God no longer restrains divine honours; and as he had prepared the minds of his disciples, whom he took with him in the mount of transfiguration, by there giving them a glimpse of his glory before his humiliation and sufferings, so here the Lord, by this triumphant entrance into the holy city as the last public act before his crucifixion, most decidedly proved that to him, and him alone, the prophet pointed; and that he was, and is, the very One, and the only One, who ever entered Jerusalem in this manner. Oh! what a world of wonders is contained in that one glorious person, our most glorious Christ! And through what a world of marvellous events is the Lord gathering in, and bringing home to himself his people!

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

"And the multitude said, This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." (Matt. xxi. 10, 11.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

We are now arrived at that part of the Lord's history which is the most interesting part of it, from the great events which followed, namely, our Lord's entrance into the city. And we are told, that "all the city was moved." And well they might, had they known the glorious person who was thus come, according to the prediction of the prophets, among them, and the gracious purpose for which he was now come. But the general question was, "Who is this?" What, even in the mere outward appearance of Christ, did they not know him, who had gone in and out before them during the several years of his being made manifest to Israel, in working miracles, raising the dead, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases among the people? Some, no doubt, of the Lord's people were there: and all such could not but have been struck with the Divine Majesty which shone forth, amidst all the surrounding appearances, in the person of our most glorious Christ. And, indeed, at that time a general opinion prevailed that the period was nigh when, according to the prophets, the Messiah should come. Hence the question from John the Baptist to Christ: "Art thou he that should come; or look we for another?" (Matt. xi. 3.) Hence the question to John himself: "Art thou the Christ?" (John i. 21.) The moment was big with expectation; and every eye was on the look out; and every foot stood as on tip-toe for the Lord's coming! And yet while spiritually discerned only by the spiritually taught few, (John i. 14.) the great mass of the dwellers at Jerusalem and their rulers, (as Paul in one of his sermons afterwards expressed it,) "because they knew him not, neither the voices of the prophets, which were read every sabbath day;

they fulfilled them in condemning him." (Acts xiii. 27.) And to what cause but the same must be ascribed the blindness of all natural and unregenerated men in the present hour, amidst the full blaze of gospel light?

There is an infinite depth of divine truth contained in the answer given by the unconscious multitude to the general cry of the city, in their inquiry after Christ, "who is this?" when they said, "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth, of Galilee." I know not whether my reader himself is aware of the extent of it: but even if he be, he will not think it superfluous to gather the several interesting particulars into one assemblage, and lay the same before him. And if he be not aware how very much is contained in the words themselves, it will be no small service to inform him, according to Scripture testimony.

It will be remembered, that when the Jews at any time had occasion to speak of our most glorious Christ, they did for the most part connect with it, as a mark of contempt, that he was of Nazareth. And as Nazareth itself was one of the smallest cities of Zebulon, they thought there could be no greater opprobrium manifested to his person than that he came from a place of such little signification. Hence the question, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John i. 46.) "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." (John vii. 52.) But to those who are taught of God, and who look deeper into the subject, we find that this name given to our most glorious Christ, was of the highest importance; and all along intended by Jehovah, in his Trinity of persons, to designate the Redeemer's character in a most special and peculiar point of view. He was, and is, the only true Nazarite of God, to whom all others were intended to minister, but as types and shadows. And a little attention to the Holy Scrip-

tures, accompanied with divine teaching, will abundantly make it appear.

And here in the opening of this inquiry, let it be recollected that Christ was not born in Nazareth, but in Bethlehem. And his removal into Nazareth was solely to bring about this divine purpose of God, that he might be called a Nazarene. So speaks the evangelist. For after describing the place of his nativity in Bethlehem of Judea, it is said in the close of the chapter, "that he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets: He shall be called a Nazarene." (Matt. ii. 1. 23.)

And who, and what, were the prophets that had so designated Christ? More or less all of them, from the first ages of the church. For all, under one shadow or another, in all their predictions had an eye to Christ; for as the angel told John "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Rev. xix. 10.) Hence Peter, in the close of his sermon before Cornelius and his household, summed up the whole of his animated discourse, and which the Holy Ghost so blessed to the people, with those striking words, speaking of Christ, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts x. 43.) And if with this view we trace the subject through the sacred writings, we shall find the spirit of prophecy continually appearing among all the ancient servants of the Lord. I must not enlarge, for the limits assigned me will not admit of it. A few examples must therefore suffice:

The patriarch Jacob, when dying, in the blessing he delivered to his children, had an express allusion to our most glorious Christ, under this appellation of the Nazarite. Speaking to Joseph, a most illustrious type of Christ, Jacob's prediction concerning him,

among other particulars, was thus expressed: "The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings if thy progenitors, unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." In the original for separate, the word is Netzer, that is a Nazarite, or one set apart, or separate from among his brethren. (Gen. xlix. 26.) And it is the same word made use of, when speaking of Samson, "a Nazarite unto God." (Judges xiii. 5.) Moses also in his blessing the tribe of Joseph, useth the same word. (Deut. xxxiii. 16.) Both prophecies indeed referred to Christ, of whom Joseph was the type and the Lord himself was the great Antitype, the true Nazarite; or the separate from among his brethren. Samson and Samuel also, were both spoken of under the same character, and the Scriptures in relation to them on this ground are to the same purport. (Judges xiii. 5. 1 Sam. i. 11.)

And as if to keep the church always alive to the expectation of this great and only true Nazarite, it is highly observable that the Holy Ghost, by his servants the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah, hath used the word Netzer, in all those Scriptures, when speaking of Christ, by the spirit of prophecy. I pray the reader to consult a few of them: (Isaiah iv. 2. and xi. 1. Jeremiah xxiii. 5. and xxxiii. 15.) In all these sacred portions, the word Netzer is rendered Branch, which is to the same amount. And in the prophecies of Zechariah, chapters iii. 8. and vi. 12, to point out yet more strikingly the Almighty Netzer, or Branch, the Christ, the word is translated in capitals.

But we must not stop here: If we pass on to the writings of the New Testament, we shall find the several bearings of the subject opening in a yet more plain and palpable manner. And here we discern

that the miraculous conception of Christ, without the intervention of a human father, was at Nazareth. And though, when the fulness of the time came from his birth, it was as one of the prophets ages before had foretold, at Bethlehem Ephratah; (Micah v. 2.) yet the miraculous conception had its date from the annunciation of the angel to the Virgin Mary, at Nazareth. (See Luke i. 26—38. compared with Isaiah vii. 14.) What a coincidence of circumstances were here planned, and brought together by Jehovah, for the accomplishment of this one glorious event! "Emmanuel, God with us." And who less than God himself, "who ordereth all things according to the counsel of his own will," could have arranged and accomplished events so seemingly contradictory to be brought together. "He shall be a Nazarite from the womb." He is therefore miraculously conceived at Nazareth. But He, "whose goings forth have been of old from everlasting" shall be born at Bethlehem Ephratah: for so it was written by the prophet. (Matt. ii. 1, 6.) And who that reads those Scriptures with an humble eye, and a sincere desire after truth, but will feel constrained to say with Paul, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." (1 Tim. iii. 16.)

The subject is so exceedingly interesting, according to my view, that could I dare indulge, I should prosecute it very largely. But let me just add under this branch of it, that besides those types and shadows referring to Christ, the true and only Nazarite, the Lord was pleased to direct a law concerning what were called Nazarim, or Nazarites, in their dedicating themselves to God. The reader will find an ample account of the order, Numbers vi. throughout. And as this self-dedication among the faithful, evidently had allusion to him, who for the sake of his people sanctified himself, (John xvii. 19.) so was it

designed to keep up a constant eye in the expectation of him, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," (Heb. vii. 26.) And we find in the most degenerate age of the church, the order was still preserved; though from the language of the mournful prophet, we are taught how far short they came to the original institution. The man of God thus draws the affecting picture: "Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire." (Lamb. iv. 7.) But when the prophet came to describe the days in which his lot was cast, he thus represents the awful state of their departure, "Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick." (Lam. iv. 8.) The prophet Amos hath a similar lamentation: "And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord? But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not." (Amos ii. 11, 12.)

I shall close my observations on this subject of the Nazarite, with only desiring the reader to follow me through the gospel; and mark down in how many places, and by how many persons, and upon how many occasions, our most glorious Lord is called, by way of eminent distinction, Jesus Christ, of Nazareth. Surely, when he hath so done, and taken them in one collected point of view, if the Lord be his teacher, he will be led to conclude with me, that the appointment must have been derived from somewhat more than man; and could have originated only from the Lord of hosts. And however many of the several characters among them who so designated Christ, meant

the name as a subject of reproach, and not of honour, God's design was thereby to overrule the minds of his enemies, and compel all to bring glory to him, the one, true, and only Nazarite of God.

The first we meet with in the gospel to this amount, in giving this distinguishing name to our most glorious Christ, was Satan himself. "Let us alone," said he, "what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth. Art thou come to destroy us? We know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." (Mark i. 24.) Next we find the apostles giving in their testimony to the same thing: "We have found him, (saith Philip,) of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write; Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John i. 45.) The Roman soldiers also had caught the impression who Christ was, and though they meant it as others around them did, in contempt and derision, yet the Lord would have their testimony also to the same glorious truth; and when they went to apprehend Christ in the garden, and Jesus himself went forth to them and said, "Whom seek ye? And they answered him, Jesus of Nazareth." (John xviii. 4, 5.) The servant-maid, in the hall of Pilate, little thought what a testimony she was giving to God's King in Zion, when she said of Peter, "And this fellow also, was with Jesus of Nazareth." (Matt. xxvi. 71.) The Roman governor must also give in his evidence to the same; and he did it, that it might be the more memorable and illustrious, in a yet more extraordinary manner; for he wrote it as a superscription for the cross, and in three different languages; and the writing was "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." (John xix. 19.) But not from enemies only, and men, and devils, was the testimony drawn, but angels came from heaven, to bear witness to the same. For we read, that in the morning of our Lord's resurrection, the angels addressed the godly followers

of our Lord, who were waiting at Christ's tomb, with, "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. Behold, the place where the Lord lay." (Mark xvi. 6.) And the apostles after our Lord's ascension, continually dwelt upon the same. Peter in his sermon, on the day of Pentecost, called his Lord, "Jesus Christ of Nazareth." (Acts ii. 22.) So at the healing of the cripple, "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." (Acts iii. 6. again Acts iv. 10.) And lastly, and above all, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, when he called to Paul from heaven, called himself by this name: "I am Jesus of Nazareth," or the Nazarite; truly, the only One. (Acts xxii. 8.)

And now what saith the reader to these things? Had it been possible for him to have been present, when Jesus entered Jerusalem; and with this cloud of witnesses which he now hath in view; and had he beheld the whole city moved, and crying out, "Who is this?" And had he heard the answer, "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth, of Galilee!" What would his views have been then, of our most glorious Christ? And what are, or ought to be his views now? Who cannot, or who will not, but behold in him, that the first and ultimate design of Jehovah, from beginning to end, and from one eternity to another, is to exalt and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. He, and he only, was, and is, the true Nazarite of God. All and every other, ministered but to him: They only spake of Jesus. They only shadowed forth Jesus. And holiness, or supposed holiness, in their lives, was altogether false and mistaken. And this sweet feature of character in our most glorious Lord, as well as in every other, was specially, personally, and only his. The solemn dedication of himself to God for the salvation of his people, was the one great object of every ministration. Hail! thou blessed Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Blessings be on the head

of him which was separated from his brethren. "The fathers to the children shall make known thy truth."

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

"And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

"And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them." (Matt. xxi. 12—14.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

It is remarkable that the Son of God directed his steps towards the temple, and not towards the palace. True, his kingdom was not of this world, though he was the universal Lord of heaven and earth. But the Lord going immediately to the temple, perhaps was meant to shew, that his kingdom was, and is, spiritual. And hereby he testified what the prophets had said, "The glory of the latter house should be greater than that of the former;" and which was made so by his presence. (Hag. ii. 9.) And another prophet had predicted, "that the Lord should suddenly come to his temple." (Mal. iii. 1.) Probably these were among the causes for which the Lord Jesus, instead of going to the tower of David, the strong hold of Zion, the palace, went to the temple; to shew to after ages, that these prophecies were now fulfilled, and "the desire of all nations was come." (Hag. ii. 7.)

But there was another great object to be accomplished by the Lord Jesus going to the temple;

namely, to purge the temple from the profanities exercised there. This sacred place had been long made a place of trade; a bazaar, where men sold beasts for sacrifice, under pretence of aiding religion. And as the currency of money for strangers was not so generally attainable in the common circumstances of the trade of the city, those which were thus trying for gain, availed themselves of helping strangers in opening shops in the purlieus of worship for this purpose.

Here therefore the Lord Jesus Christ directed his first steps after his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, to put an end to this traffic. Hence we read, that "he cast out all them that sold, and that bought in the temple; and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seat of them that sold doves, and said unto them: It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." In attending to the several very weighty things connected with this deportment of Christ; we shall do well to observe that this was the second time the Lord Jesus had made such a powerful display of his Almighty sovereignty in the temple; and at both, just before the passover. The first is related to us in the second chapter of the Gospel according to John; and this latter by all the other evangelists. (See Mark xi. 25. Luke xix. 46.) John is the only one of the four which hath given us the account of the four passovers Christ attended during his ministry. (See John ii. v. vii. xiii.)

This final visit of our most glorious Christ, before his death, to the temple; though in the mighty acts he manifested there in this display of his sovereignty were not precisely the same; (compare John ii. v. vii. with this Scripture,) yet in both, we plainly discover decided marks of his eternal power and GODHEAD Indeed, (as I have more fully stated in my

'Poor Man's Commentary,' on John ii. 12.) among all the miracles of Christ, while in the flesh, (excepting the one wrought in the graden on the Roman soldiers at Christ's apprehension, (John xviii. 6.) none could exceed it. Let the reader figure to himself, our most glorious Christ, thus entering the temple, driving every thing before him; pouring out the changers' money, and not a creature daring to resist him; let him behold him overawing the whole Jewish party there present, of chief priests, and scribes; and speaking with his divine authority from the writings of the prophets: "My house," thus making the temple his own: and applying that Scripture to himself; (Isa. lvi. 7.) let him conceive what beams of divinity shone through his human nature when he thus expressed himself: and then let the reader form his own judgment, under the Lord's teaching. Indeed so much were the minds of the apostles themselves, overwhelmed by the whole scene; that we are told they connected several Scriptures in one upon the occasion, and were constrained to make an immediate application of them to Christ. (Ps. lxix. 9. and cxix. 139.) This last verse is rendered doubly precious to the church, by the apostle's observation; for it hath ever since acted as a key to open that very blessed Psalm, the one hunded and nineteenth; and to discover to all enlightened eyes, the immediate reference the whole of it hath to the person and acts of our most glorious Lord.

I stay not upon the present occasion more than to remark the coming of the blind and lame to Jesus into the temple, and the Lord healing them; for these were among the daily works of mercy wrought by Christ, before his sufferings and death; all which loudly testified the application of the words of the prophet to him. (Isa. xxxv. 4—6.) But I must not allow the reader to close the view of this part of our

Lord's ministry, in his cleansing the temple, without desiring him to inquire for himself, and in his own instance, whether the same Lord of life and glory hath driven out the buyers and sellers from his heart, and cleansed the affections which in a state of unrenewed nature, are all full of uncleanness; but when changed by sovereign grace, are brought into obedience to the captivity of Christ. Among the truest and most decided testimonies of regeneration, are these which shew that we are delivered from the power of darkness; and are "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." Hence the question of the apostle, which while apparently proposing the inquiry, doth at the same time determine the point; "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?" (1 Cor. vi. 19.) Hence that other Scripture cometh in most blessedly to a farther illustration; "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin: but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness." (Rom. viii. 10.) My body, and your body, if in spirit we are regenerated, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, still feel, and know, and groan, under the workings of corruption. But the feeling them, and groaning under them, differ most materially from the being dead, and unfeeling to the consciousness of them, and the being distressed about them, which is not the character of the "dead in trespasses and sins." Holy men of old felt as believers in Christ now feel; and lamented, as we now lament, that we carry about with us a body of sin and death. Nevertheless, as these things tend to endear Christ; and not unfrequently to awaken the cry of the soul to Christ, to do for us as he did for those in the temple, drive out all the buyers and sellers from our hearts, which is the lawful right of the Lord of the temple to occupy; they are made to minister to this blessed end; namely, to

preserve in our minds a just apprehension of our own worthlessness, and the Lord's all-sufficiency; and by sovereign grace, always preserving alive the remembrance where alone our righteousness and safety is; and in whom alone found, to walk with an holy cautiousness all our days, convinced that we can never trust ourselves too little, or Christ too much. "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." (Isa. xlv. 24, 25.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, "And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus said unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" (Matt. xxi. 15, 16.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

We have here presented to us in this part of the history, what various other parts of the records of our Lord's ministry relate, in the behaviour of the chief priests and scribes upon the occasion. Their indignation brake out at what they beheld. And neither the miraculous cures Jesus wrought on the blind and the lame, nor the hosannas of the children, nor the praises of the healed, had any effect on their hardened and implacable hearts. It is not said, whether those men were among the buyers and sellers in

the temple, when Christ drove them out; or whether, and which is more than probable, they were sent for by Christ's foes to put a check to the authority that the Lord had then exercised in expeling the traders from that sacred place; but it is said that "they saw the wonderful things that he did;" and heard the children's hosannas! Yes! All these, and more, are without effect, where no grace within operates to impress the most wonderful works without. If the miserable in everlasting chains were liberated, their obduracy would remain. Change of place makes no change of heart!

But from contemplating the awful state of the hardened priests and scribes, let us behold the very blessed testimony those Jewish children gave to our most glorious Lord, in their shouts of hosanna; and let us gather the instruction therefrom, which the Holy Ghost intended for the church in all ages. It was at least a thousand years before this event of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, that David, under the spirit of prophecy, delivered the sweet Scripture which the Son of God here quoted, and applied to himself: "Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" (Psalm viii. 2.) And who but must conclude that the Lord the Spirit, which inspired David's mind to deliver the Scripture, prompted those babes of Jerusalem to fulfil it? From whence should such a company of little children have been stimulated to acts of this nature, but from the over-ruling power of God? Were they not Jewish children; many of whose fathers, no doubt, were among the enemies of Christ? And is it not probable, that if their parents were of those who were profaning the temple with their trade, their children were there making it the place of their play? When therefore the Lord of the temple entered, and scattered his enemies before him; and the blind eyes

he opened; and made the lame to leap as an hart; suddenly the same Almighty power wrought in the hearts of those children; and however unconscious of the testimony they bore, they cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David."

I take occasion herefrom to admonish all godly parents, to gather instruction from a scene so beautiful and interesting; and that they fail not to introduce their children, even their little children, betimes to the house of the Lord. Who shall say at what tender age impressions of grace are sometimes begun! It is recorded in the word of God itself, concerning Timothy, that "from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures." And the names of his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice, are recorded in the book of God on this account; whose history, but for this reason very likely, we should not have known: "the unfeigned faith that was in them." (2 Tim. 1—5. iii. 15.) That God himself takes pleasure in the attention shewn by godly parents to this gathering of their household to sacred worship, is evident from what the Lord hath said by one of his prophets. For when commanding a solemn assembly, and sanctifying the congregation, the Lord added to the precept; not only to assemble the elders, but to "gather their children;" yea, "and those that suck the breasts," (Joel ii. 16.) as if their very presence had weight with the Lord. And as if the Lord meant to have it impressed upon the minds of his people, that as the cry of the infant prompted the mother instantly to take it to her breast, so the Lord would give to his redeemed ones the milk of consolation; "that they might suck out and be delighted with the abundance of the Lord's glory." I said, "as if their very presence had weight with the Lord." And I beg the expression to be noticed by the godly reader. For as the Lord Jesus, in the days of his flesh, when

sending his deciples to teach and to preach in the cities, gave a precept, blended with a promise to this amount, I confess that I lay great stress upon it: "Into whatsoever house," said Jesus, "ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again." (Luke x. 5, 6.) By the son of peace being there, is evidently implied one of the Lord's chosen ones. And if but an infant, too young to know the Lord, yet known of the Lord; "for the Lord knoweth them that are his." (2 Tim. ii. 19.) Yea, and if there be but one such in the house, and no other; however the child itself is unconscious of it, yet there the peace of Christ is! "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (1 Cor. v. 6.) On this account, the very youngest branches of a house or family, should always make part of the congregation, whenever health and convenience so favour. And I blush not to say, that I behold such with more than ordinary delight, knowing that they, as much as their elders, are included in that promise: "Whenever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.)

It is possible that these lines may fall under the observation of some very young children: and though what I have said cannot be noticed by babes at the breasts; yet if farther advanced to read the word of God, and to remark what is here written about elder children also, my prayers accompany my pen, that the Lord may render it useful to his little ones. If the Lord Jesus hath so expressed himself, with such tenderness, as to command little children to be brought unto him, and rebuked those that would have kept them from him, will he not always have his eye upon them, and do as he did in the days of his flesh; for he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. (Mark x. 13. 16.) Was

the Lord Jesus pleased with those Jewish children in the temple? and is he not also pleased with his christian children in his church? Did the Lord accept their hosannas then; and will he not accept your hallelujahs now? The same grace Jesus manifested in Jerusalem to the children, he will manifest to them in Zion; for he is Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." (Heb. xiii. 8.) Let any and every sweet child therefore, while reading this Scripture of the hosannas in the temple, take confidence from the favour of Christ, and the gracious assurance the Lord then gave, which is the same now: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, the Lord perfecteth praise."

The triumphant entrance of our most glorious Christ into Jerusalem, a few days before his humiliation and sufferings in the garden, and on the cross; leads to some very weighty and sublime considerations. The hosannas were no unsuitable prelude to the cries which soon after followed: "Crucify him! crucify him!" The redeemed and regenerated church of Christ will find from divine teaching, ample scope for improvement under both. These different views indeed, to a natural man, must always create, as it hath invariably in all ages done, subjects of inexplicable difficulty. For what the Scripture asserts, the uniform history of the world constantly proves: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) As in a state of nature, there is no possibility for any one to have real, spiritual, and scriptural apprehensions of the total depravity of our fallen state; so neither can there be any proper knowledge of the person and salvation of Christ, until a supernatural work is wrought in the heart. To all such, therefore, the person of Christ

in his triumph on entering Jerusalem; and the subject of Christ in his finished salvation, by his sufferings and death at Jerusalem; both are alike undiscoverable, and unknown. But to the taught of God, nothing can be more intelligible and productive of more joy.

I pray the reader to have both in contemplation, as he views and reviews the wonderful subject. The consciousness that in him, who thus entered Jerusalem, dwelt all "the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily;" and who, by the taking our nature into union with his divine, gave a full and complete efficacy to the one offering of himself on the cross; whereby "he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," affords to the truly regenerated mind, taught of God, a perfect apprehension of the completeness of salvation, and the church's security therein. Hence believers of the present hour, as truly as believers who then beheld Christ in his triumphant entrance, can, and do, by faith, mingle in the throng which went before, and that followed, and say as they did: "Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

And by connecting the whole of the Lord's stupendous advents into one and the same view, as forming one and the same chain of grace, link by link, from one eternity to another; we form a true scriptural statement of the marvellous subject; "His goings forth of old, from everlasting, and his delights with the sons of men before all worlds:" sweet and frequent visits he made to his chosen under the Old Testament dispensation; the openly tabernacling in substance of our flesh under the New; the spiritual manifestations he is now daily making of himself to his people, "otherwise than to the world;" and the promised assurance he hath given of his shortly coming, "to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe;" all these serve to shew, that the very

heart of our glorious Lord is with his people; and he is, as he said, when he had finished redemption work, and was on his return to glory; "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.)

The Lord give grace to all his people, to be always on the watch tower for the Lord's return; that when all his redeemed ones shall be gathered together, who during the several ages of the churches have been scattered abroad, but will then form one immense body; the glorious event which John saw in vision, will then be realized; and the Almighty Head of his body, the church, will be as the sun in the centre of the ransomed host; and they, as satellites, shining from the reflection of his glory put upon them. "After this, I beheld, (said John,) and lo! a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen, blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanks-giving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God, for ever and ever." Amen.

THE

# LORD JESUS WASHING THE FEET OF HIS DISCIPLES.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world, unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

"And supper being ended, (the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;

"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God." (John xiii. 1—3.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

In order to enter into a scriptural apprehension of the very interesting subject here proposed to us, in the view of our most glorious Lord washing the feet of his disciples; we must first take into connection with it, the contemplation of our Lord's person, and his union with his church and people; tracing the history back to the period which the Holy Ghost had stated in other parts of his divine word, and which commenced before the world began. We must behold the Lord of life and glory, as the Head and Husband of his church, before he entered upon that

lovely and all-loving part of his divine character, when tabernacling openly in substance of our flesh, he stood up as our Surety and Redeemer, to do away sin, and all the evils of sin, by the sacrifice of himself. Indeed we must contemplate him in his everlasting love; embracing not only the whole time state of the church, but running from one eternity into another, before we can fully understand, and as fully appreciate the blessedness of what is here said in the opening of this Scripture, that "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

I stay not however in a work of this kind, necessarily confined within narrow limits, any longer than just to observe, than when the Son of God, one of the holy Three in One, which bear record in heaven, was pleased from covenant engagments in the GODHEAD, to be the one of the sacred Three that would assume unto himself that holy portion of our nature for the purposes of grace, and to betroth to himself the church for ever; the Scriptures describe him as that Almighty One, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Mich. v. 2.) Hence he is described as speaking himself, under a well known name of his, Wisdom; as "being set up from everlasting, from the beginning; or ever the earth was." And then he saith; "his delights were with the sons of men." (Prov. viii. 22—31.) Hence the glories of his person as God, and the glories of his person as God and man, Mediator, must be traced to this inherency, and essential dignity in himself, in order to have a proper conception of the infinite love he bore to his church; and the infinite humiliation of the act described in this Scripture, of washing his disciples' feet.

And when we have thus had our minds directed back to the eternal state, to take though but a

glimpse of Christ's personal glories, and his love to his church before all time; we must then follow up the subject, in beholding, according to the same divine information of Holy Scripture, how the church stood in relation to Christ, her Head and Husband, before all time, and before the foundation of the world was laid. She is said to have been chosen in Christ, and grace given to her in Christ, before the world began. So that in this view of her, and from her relation to Christ, she then possessed a purity in her Lord; "being holy and without blame before God in love." (Eph. i. 4.)

When therefore we descend in the prosecution of the history to this time-state of the church, we should never lose sight of her original dignity and loveliness. We should keep in view that this is not the original condition, in which in the divine view she once was; neither is it the final state, in which she will always be. Distant and estranged as she was in her affections, and love, and obedience to her Lord, by reason of her sunken, degraded condition by the fall; the union with her Head and Husband still remained the same. Adulterous and polluted as she was, and is, until recovered by sovereign grace; still she was, and everlastingly must be, the spouse of Jesus Christ. For the Lord God of Israel saith; "that he hateth putting away." (Mal. ii. 16.) And although she failed in her love and affection, the Lord Jesus never failed in his. This Scripture very blessedly states this delightful truth: "Jesus having loved his own which were in the world, he loveth them to the end." Oh! blessed truth. For it is this unchanging unalterable love of the whole Trinity of persons, manifested to the church in the person of our most glorious Christ; which is the cause of the salvation of the church, and secures her everlasting safety. For not only hath it given birth to our redemption

from the guilt of sin; but to the regeneration of the heart, and the taking away the enmity of our nature by the fall, and planting a new nature within. For such is the love of God to his church; that the Lord hath not only loved her, but by his sovereign grace brings her to the love of himself. Not only redeemed her from her natural hatred against him, which the fall induced; but hath brought her to the knowledge of his love to her, to love him through his divine grace. He hath so loved her, as to give himself for her; and hath shed abroad the love of God in her heart, by the Holy Ghost which he hath given unto her. (Rom. v. 5.)

But we must not stop here: there is a peculiarity in this Scripture, concerning this love of Christ to his church, which renders it particularly blessed. "Jesus having loved his own," it is said, "which were in the world." By his own, means his own church, his own people. They that were given him by the Father; whom he personally betrothed unto himself. They whom he came to seek and to save by his redemption; and whom the Holy Ghost would regenerate by his sovereign grace. This distinction is the more to be regarded, because the Scriptures, speaking of the nation of the Jews as a nation, are called Christ's own; he being himself, after the flesh, of the seed of Abraham; and consequently, considered as to nation, Christ himself was a Jew. Hence it is said when speaking of Christ, that "he came unto his own," (that is, he came to his own nation,) "and his own received him not." (John i. 11.) But this totally differs from the sense and meaning of the words "his own," in this chapter. In the former, of his own, is meant no more than that Christ came to his own nation, the Jews. In the latter, by his own, is meant a relationship and affinity; such as we should speak of when we described a man's wife, or children. It is such

the Scripture hath in view, when speaking of the unalterable love of Christ to his body the church; "having loved his own which are in the world, he loveth them unto the end;" that is for ever. A most blessed consideration to the mind of the Lord's people, amidst all the fluctuating circumstances of their perpetual changing frames and dispositions. We are, in our highest moments, like the planet of the night; under whose influences we live, and by whose tides we are governed. The moon is never at one fixed state, but always on the advance, or on the wane. But Christ our Sun, is our centre; "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He is of one mind, and who can change him? He saith himself: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." (Isaiah xlvi. 10.) Let the reader revolve over and over, and over again, the sweet Scripture "having loved his own which were in the world, he loveth them to the end."

One word more before we enter upon the history of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. It is said, that before the feast of the passover, Jesus "knowing that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father." Yes; this was to be the last passover, (which was the fourth) from the commencement of Christ's public ministry, unto the close of it: See John ii. v. vii. and this was the fourth. Jesus knowing this, desired, as he had said, "that he might eat this passover, (which would be the final one) with them before he suffered." (Luke xxii. 15.) This desire of the Lord Jesus, to paschalize with his church, (of which the disciples were the representatives,) finally had a double object in the accomplishment. First: it honoured and confirmed the original passover, which the Lord had instituted in coming forth from Egypt, proving thereby that the solemn service was wholly typical of himself. And secondly, the Lord

meaning to do away the shadow for ever, as himself the substance was now come, immediately followed up the final celebration of the passover with the first introduction and institution of the holy supper, to be a standing memorial of his death in his church, until his second coming. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast." (1 Cor. v. 7, 8.)

Neither is this all. For it is said, that "Jesus knew that his hour was come." What hour? The greatest and most memorable of all hours that ever was numbered, since time itself began to mark time from the mass of a countless eternity. The hour in which the Son of God would "finish the transgression, and make an end of sins, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness, and seal up the vision and prophecy, and anoint the most Holy." (Dan. ix. 24.) And the hour, which when these glorious things he had accomplished, the Son of God would depart out of this world unto his Father; and return to those embraces in which he had lain embosomed from all eternity. Full of those high thoughts, the Lord Jesus began to prepare himself for performing that act of humiliation this Scripture so sweetly hath recorded, of washing the disciples' feet.

But we enervate the relation, if we only look at it in the mere outward manifestations of the humility of our most glorious Christ. The sublime, though no less simple, narrative drawn by the Evangelist under the Holy Ghost's inspiration, opens to us every thing that is blessed, and lovely, and gracious.

It is said that Jesus "knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands;" that is as Mediator; for all things as God, one in the unity of the divine essence in common with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, were his before. But the all things with

which Christ was gifted, was as Mediator. And what a glorious comprehension of all things Jesus had as Mediator: not only as head of his body the church; but as over all creatures, and the whole creation of God; being himself the infinite fulness, which filled all in all! "Power over all flesh," as he himself said; that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him. (John xvii. 2.) So that added to his eternal power, which he had in the essence of the divine unity, with the other persons in the GODHEAD, all things were in his hand as Mediator, to accomplish all the purposes of grace; and to accomplish all the executive administration, which Jehovah in his Trinity of persons had ordained in the revelation of himself, in all the departments of nature here, and glory hereafter.

Let the reader pause over this short, but sublime view of our most glorious Christ. And let him, as it concerns himself, learn by the way, to whom to look for all things, and from whom to expect all things, in whose Almighty hand all things are. His, is to gather his church to himself; to open the eyes of them that are spiritually born blind; to cause the deaf ears "to hear the words of the book;" to open the heart, and to spiritualize the understanding: and in short, at whose Almighty disposal are all things; who hath the keys of heaven and hell, "who openeth, and none shutteth; and who shutteth and none openeth." (Rev. iii. 7.) Let the reader when he hath duly pondered this part of the subject, contemplate the Lord Jesus under another endearing feature of character here described. It is said that Jesus knew also, "that he was come from God, and went to God." And was this the time the Lord chose to shew forth his unequalled humility in washing his disciples' feet? One might have thought, (speaking after the manner of men) that the mind of Christ would have been

absorbed in the prospect of his return to his Father; and that then, least of all others, would have been occupied about a few poor fishermen of Galilee! But here, as in a thousand other instances, "the Lord's thoughts are not our thoughts; neither our ways his ways." True; the Lord was about to return to the Father, as soon as the last act of the great redemption work, for which he came, he had finished; and which, as this Scripture saith, was nigh at hand. But there is a sense in which he had never been absent from the Father, as he said to Nicodemus: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." (John iii. 13.) So that in the moment while conversing with Nicodemus on earth, the Lord of life and glory was in heaven. And this was a riddle at that time to the Jewish ruler, as it is at this day, to all natural unrenewed men; and only to be understood by those who are spiritually enlightened. And what a lovely representation is here made of the Son of God; that then in the prospect before him of departure to the Father, he would manifest such an act of grace to his church, of whom the disciples were the then representatives, in washing their feet!

But let the reader take another view of our most glorious Christ on this occasion: for improvements upon improvements arise out of it. To those who look superficially on, and have not had occasion from sharp exercises, even among the Lord's people, to prove the depths of the Lord's grace; they would have supposed that the Lord's return to his Father must have had another source of delight and interest in it, because the many of his people that were then in heaven, had never seen the Lord's face on earth, and of course were longing for their Lord's return. But here, as in the former instance, the more we attend to the subject, the more we are led to admire

and adore the Lord's tenderness of regard on this occasion to his church here below. True, the Lord had his patriarchs and prophets, and an host of his faithful gone before, that were on the look out for his coming; but we see that nothing would carry off his attention from his apostles and followers which were to be left here below, after his bodily presence was withdrawn from them. He therefore adopted this method; which beside the mysterious grace intended from it spiritually and symbolically, as hereafter will be adverted to; in order by so palpable an act of humility, as to wash their feet, became the fullest proof how much he loved them.

But one thing more remains yet to be considered in relation to this event: namely, what is said of Judas: "The devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him." And was Judas present upon this occasion? Yes. And did the Lord Jesus wash his feet among the rest of his disciples? No doubt the Lord did; for otherwise it would have been noticed by the rest of the apostles. And if the reader, without interrupting the progress of the history, will just glance at what is said in the twenty-first verse of this same chapter, he will discover that Judas remained still present after. For the Lord then for the first time intimated that one of them would betray him. Upon which occasion it is said, that the disciples immediately looked one upon another, as if struck with astonishment; and, as it is said, "doubting of whom Jesus spake." Which had the Lord omitted the washing of Judas, and him, only; so open a testimony of disregard, would at once have decided who the traitor was, and no longer have called up the anxious iniquiry of the faithful servants of the Lord. Moreover, let it be remembered, that the Lord at the time he chose Judas for a disciple, perfectly knew that he was a

devil; for so Jesus himself declared. (John vi. 70, 71.) The Lord washing his feet in common with the rest of the disciples, and his partaking of the passover and of the supper; these were all outward things, as ordinances only; and form a striking distinction from saving grace. The Lord Jesus chose Judas to the office; but he was never chosen of God the Father, in election; and the one, void of the other, is of no value. I have stated this somewhat largely in my Poor Man's Commentary; which the limits of this work will not allow. Nevertheless, as the subject is of infinite importance, and this Scripture Extract may be seen where the other work may not come, I must not dismiss this part of the history, concerning Judas, without a farther observation.

There is nothing in reality in this account of the traitor Judas, partaking in all these condescending acts of the Lord Jesus, which ought to excite surprise or beget distress in the mind of any redeemed and regenerated child of God. For the same may be observed in the Lord's ordinary dispensations in all his government. The preaching of the word, the reading of the Scriptures, and all the several means and ordinances of sacred worship; all are but means, and not the end. They act no otherwise than as the rain or dew, which falls on rocks or sands, and produces nothing. And therefore the Lord, in the general administration of the means, when the various characters meet together, renders the beneficial effects blessed to his people, while it remains unproductive, and must for ever remain unproductive to every other. What the Holy Ghost taught the church by Paul, holds good in our days as well as the apostle's days: "Now thanks, (said he,) be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ; and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of

Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the saviour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. ii. 14—16.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself.

"After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." (John xiii. 4, 5.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I would take the reader by the hand, and request him to ponder his steps, as he entereth upon the very interesting relation of the Lord Jesus in this Scripture. What a view is here given of the Son of God in our nature! Methinks, I behold our most glorious Christ, in the combined view of God and Man in one; rising from supper, and entering upon this new and unheard-of office in a lord to his servant, in washing their feet. In the eastern part of the world, it was not only an humble act, belonging to the lowest order of persons in the subordinate classes of society; but especially the very menial ones of all. And hence in that beautiful history of Abigail, when David sent to commune with her, in proposing to take her to be his wife; with a modesty very becoming and graceful, she not only intimated her great inferiority and the unsuitableness in which she stood to him for such an honour: but expressed herself yet more lowly, in adverting to this very circumstance, of such a place in David's household, more proper as belong-

ing only to the most degraded. "She arose, and bowed herself on her face to the earth; and said, Behold, let thine hand-maid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord;" (1 Sam. xxv. 41.) not even aspiring to the honour of washing David's feet, but the feet of the servants of David! But let the reader take into his view, the consideration of him, who here thus manifested such peerless grace? Not David, nor any of the kings and princes of the earth; but the Lord of life and glory, "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily." (Col. ii. 9.) Laying aside his garments, hath been supposed to designate, (and not an unapt representation,) as when the son of God laid aside the glory which he had in common with the Father before all worlds. And when the meek and lowly Saviour proceeded farther, "and girded himself with the towel;" here no less might be supposed to have shadowed the mysterious manifestations of him, "who though in the form of God; and who thought it no robbery to be equal with God; yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." (Philip. ii. 5, 6.) If the reader be enabled by divine teaching, to preserve in remembrance those astonishing features blended in one; namely, the GODHEAD dwelling in the manhood, and the man whom Jehovah distinguisheth by such a name; "my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts;" (Zech. xiii. 7.) then will the view arrest the mind with somewhat of its infinite greatness; as he beholds the Lord Jesus Christ proceeding in the work here described by the Evangelist. This is what Paul calls "the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." (1 Tim. iii. 16.) It is this which gives infinite importance to every act of our most glorious Christ, in all his divine ministry. Every event, and every transaction we read of in the gospel, were acts and transactions of

the GODHEAD, blended with the manhood; and incapable of separation. Hence the vast and stupendous mystery of what is here recorded of the Lord Jesus, washing his disciples' feet.

But the act itself had certainly somewhat symbolical in it, as well as mysterious; which it will be our wisdom under the unction of the Holy Ghost, humbly to inquire after. And this is evident from the stress the Lord Jesus laid upon the act, of himself washing his people, as we shall hereafter discover in the prosecution of the history. And what renders it the more remarkable is, that during all the former part of Christ's ministry, the Lord had never once manifested any outward or visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace; but had confined himself principally to the preaching and working miracles. Nay, we are told, that even in relation to baptism, "Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples." (John iv. 2.) But so important was this act of washing, and by Christ himself; that as the Lord told Peter, it could not be dispensed with. The real spiritual church of God hath abundant reason to be thankful, both for this most interesting record, and the infinite condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, by such a gracious act and manner of shewing symbolically the vast doctrine contained in this act of his washing his disciples' feet; for surely, it sets forth in the liveliest manner possible, the great and saving doctrines contained in it. A few leading points under the Lord's teaching, will set this matter in somewhat of a clearer point of view.

It is always blessed to trace our mercies to the fountain head of mercy; and in the covenant transactions of eternity, between the persons in the GODHEAD, to discover how each glorious person hath engaged, and is guaranteed to one another, for the full purposes of salvation, to the whole election of grace.

Thus, in relation to God the Father, the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to Titus, lays down this blessed doctrine, as a postulatum not to be questioned: "For we ourselves also," said he, alluding to the hopeless and helpless state of all men by the fall, "were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men appeared. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus iii. 3—7.) Here is a most blessed, though brief statement, of the several acts of each glorious person in the economy of grace, towards the church. While the whole church as well as the whole world, were alike sunk in the abominable transgressions of fallen nature, "the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared." For it had been held in the counsels, purposes, and decrees of God, from all eternity. When this brake out therefore in the person, and through the manifestations of our Saviour; "not according to works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us;" the gracious act of God the Father appeared in the mission of his son; and the salvation which was solely to be accomplished by the incommunicable work of our Lord Jesus Christ, and had been determined in the fore-knowledge, and fore-appointment of God the Father, arose not from any works of creature righteousness; "but according to his mercy he saved us." Then follows in order, the blessed means by which it should be accomplished;

namely, by the "washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Here is demonstrated the part which the Eternal Spirit takes in the salvation of every individual of the whole mystical members of Christ's body. And then follows how the effusion of the Holy Ghost is made known, and communicated through Christ. The apostle adds; "which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour. The washing therefore of the disciples' feet, may be supposed to have a symbolic allusion to that laver, which in other parts of Scripture, is in various expressions, and by a variety of terms, described as Christ washing his church from her sins. I stay not to particularize: but only by reference to those Scriptures. (Eph. v. 26, 27. Heb. x. 22.) And by a comparative review of the Scriptures of the prophets on this subject, with those of the apostles, the reader will find a blessed coincidence, in which the Old Testament writers are fully opened and explained by the New: (Ezek. xxxvi. 25—29 Zech. xiii. 1. 1 Cor. vi. 11.) This part of the subject will meet us again under the succeeding Scripture to the present verses, and open some farther and very interesting views to enlarge upon. But I cannot dismiss the present, until that I have first requested the reader not to pass on, until that we have taken one look more, while it is before us, at the unequalled humbleness and grace, manifested by our most glorious Christ, on this occasion.

I do hope that as often as the reader hath his mind directed to this precious Scripture, he will always connect with it the infinite greatness of the person, as well as the infinite grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, in this unequalled act of humility in which he is here shewn. For my own part, I trust through divine teaching, that I shall very often have my mind led to the contemplation of this scene of the Lord Jesus

washing his disciples' feet; and as often derive from the same grace, the very blessed instructions which arise out of it. What a humiliation it was in the Son of God to become man! And when he had become man, to condescend yet lower, if possible, and make himself of no reputation! What a farther stooping of the God and man in one person, to betroth himself to each, and every individual member of his mystical body! And (my soul, I would say to myself, as I ponder the vast mystery,) what a humiliation indeed, when that grace was manifested personally to me; and as Paul said, "who loved me, and gave himself for me!" (Gal. ii. 20.)

But let us not stop here; there is infinitely more to be developed in this peerless act of grace of our most glorious Christ. Did the Son of God thus humble himself, when he came down and openly tabernacled in our nature, and in the days of his flesh, when the Father had given all things into his hands; did he condescend to wash his disciples' feet? Surely then, he will do the same now. For there was nothing that moved him to it then, but his own love, and the same love is moving him to it in the present hour. For this Scripture sweetly saith, that "Jesus having loved his own which are in the world, he loveth them to the end." Let every poor timid believer form this conclusion, for the whole word of God warrants it. Yea, let the whole church of God be examined, and let them give in their testimony, and say from their own knowledge, is it not true? Is there any alteration in the heart of Christ now, from what it was then? Is not "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?" Yea, let those precious souls, to whom Jesus hath revealed himself in the most endearing manner; let them say, when did they find Jesus most gracious? Was it not when they found themselves most undeserving? And when the Lord appeared most conde-

scending, did he not then shine most lovely in their eyes? Here Paul's example comes in again to the comfort of all the Lord's tried ones, most deeply drenched in sin, and whose cases appear to them the most hopeless: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. v. 20, 21.) But the tempted and tried souls of the Lord's people (for such are always prone to invert the order of love, and to write bitter things against themselves) will be apt to fear sinners may be overlooked by the Lord now that he is returned to his glory, and that he will not regard the salvation of such wretched sinners as they are. Oh! do not say so! Jesus, when all things were given into his hand, while upon earth, washed his disciples' feet, with all that lowliness and meekness which bespoke the love of his heart, and will he not now, when returned to heaven, and all power is his both in heaven and on earth, bestow all that his people stand in need of, to manifest his affection? Did the Son of God first leave the throne of his glory, and come upon earth, and was made man to accomplish the salvation of his people, and now having accomplished redemption work, and returned to glory; will he not fulfil all the sacred purposes for which he came, by sending unto his people all the influences of his Spirit, to bring them to himself; that where he is, there they shall shortly be also? Did he wash the disciples' feet, and will he not wash the souls of his people? Oh! the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge! Lord grant thy people to be "filled with all the fulness of God!"

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

"Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now: but thou shalt know hereafter.

"Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

"Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, not my feet only; but also my hands and my head.

"Jesus said unto him, He that is washed, needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

"For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean." (John xiii. 6—11.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The astonishment of Peter was so great, in beholding the Lord of life and glory condescending to so wonderful an act of humiliation, and unable to account for it on any principle whatever, that when he saw Christ approaching towards him, to perform the same menial service, he exclaimed, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" We shall better enter into the apostle's feelings on this occasion, if we consider what had taken place before this event, which was among some of the last in Christ's ministry. Peter had been admitted to behold the glory of Christ, in the mount of Transfiguration. And Peter had been taught by the Father who Christ was, when, among the people of Jerusalem, various were the opinions concerning him. (Matt. xvi. 13—19.) Hence in the impulse of the moment, he thus expressed his surprise; conscious of the Lord's glory, and conscious of his own vileness, and as he had said before on another occasion, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke v. 8.)

I beseech the reader not to overlook the importance of Christ's answer. It was intended not only to

overrule Peter's objection, but to be of everlasting usefulness in the church of Christ, and among all the mysterious exercises of the Lord's people, from generation to generation. Jesus speaks to his tried ones, upon every occasion, when their way is dark, and his providences seem thwarting: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Matters may appear discouraging. The promises, as if impossible to be accomplished. But these are as in our view. Clouds only intervene to obscure the face of the sun. But these effects are below that great luminary of the day. All is bright, and in one continued serenity above. And the promise is absolute; "at evening time, it shall be light." The Lord's time is always the best time; and the Lord's people upon every exercise would do well to have in rememberance these words of the Lord: "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.

And I beg the reader on another account, to observe with great attention those words of Christ; for they prove that somewhat more than the mere cleansing of the feet was veiled under this condescending act of Christ, but was symbolical of some greater mystery. And when Peter still persisted in refusing to receive this attention of the Lord Jesus Christ, saying, "Thou shalt never wash my feet;" then the Lord's reply opened in part somewhat in a way of explanation: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." And it appears by the apostle's answer, that he himself discovered it; for he instantly said; "Lord! not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." You observe how changed the apostle's words are. Before, he had totally declined the Lord's intention; and in a way of great positiveness, had declared that it should never be done. But now, convinced by our Lord's expressions, and by the manner

in which Jesus spake, that a matter of infinite moment was in it, he begged that not his feet only, but his hands and his head might be partakers of the blessing. And the Lord added, that the being washed by him included every needful ablution; for it made the receiver "clean every whit." And what is not the smallest consideration, in reference to the doctrine contained in this washing of the feet; the Lord, in allusion to Judas, who was still present, drew the line of distinction between his faithful disciples and the traitor, by saying: "And ye are clean, but not all: for he knew who should betray him; therefore said he ye are not all clean."

It will be time now humbly to inquire on Scriptural ground, what might be supposed among the mysterious events included in this humiliation of Christ; and which, under divine teaching, may be in some measure understood from those several expressions of our most glorious Lord.

And first: In relation to the act itself of washing. This was among the services of the Jewish church. We find the Lord giving commandment by Moses to Aaron; for "Aaron and his sons to wash their hands and feet in water, in a laver of brass, when they went into the tabernacle of the congregation, that they died not." (Exod. xxx. 17—21.) And hence in after ages, we hear the prophet, under the Holy Ghost, calling upon the ministers of the sanctuary, to "touch no unclean thing;—Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." (Isa. lii. 11.) And hence we read in the description of the gospel church which John saw in vision, that there was a "sea of glass, like unto crystal, before the throne." (Rev. iv. 6.) Now these were all figurative expressions of the being washed by Christ. Hence the exhortation; "Having an High Priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having

our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (Heb. x. 21, 22.) And all the redeemed and regenerated church of our most glorious Christ, are said to have been made partakers of those divine ablutions; when by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, we are saved from the ruins of our fallen nature. "And such were some of you; but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. vi. 11.)

But secondly: The advantage of the washings under the Old Testament dispensation, and all the ordinances under the New, depended not upon the outward administration of them, but the inward and spiritual effect. It is the great hinge on which the mysterious part of this divine service wrought by Christ himself hangs; that it was not the simple act of the outward washing, on which the Lord laid the stress of the blessing; but the inward and divine operation he himself communicated them with. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." As if the Lord had said; By this outward ministration, I mean to shew you the necessity of my church in every individual member of my mystical body being washed in my blood. And whosoever is not washed in my blood hath no part with me. The outward ministry, without the inward blessing, had nothing but the mere symbol. It was like any other act of Christ's outward ministry while upon earth; such as his preaching. Hence we read, that some will pretend to avail themselves of this argument at that day: and say, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say; I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity." Such was Judas now, among the number, who had in common with the rest, enjoyed the out-

ward means, but no inward effect. And such there are, and will be, in every age of the church, who mingle with the Lord's people, but are not of the Lord's people; unto whom the Lord hath spoken, and doth now speak in words like those of the prophet: "When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seven month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?" (Zech. vii. 5.) As if the Lord had said: What spiritual knowledge had you of me in those bodily ordinances? What communion passed from me to you by my Spirit, saith the Lord?

Thirdly: If the reader will look a little more closely to our Lord's words, as delivered personally to Peter, and the Spirit of illumination shines on the Lord's words; and at the same time if this reflection from the words shines into the reader's heart, he will perceive that the words of Christ are, If I wash thee not; that is thy person, not thy feet; not in the elementary water, but in my blood; not by the outward cleansing, but by the inward grace. Here an everlasting distinction is drawn between all the means, however many, or however good in themselves; which after all, are but means, and not the end; and the divine operations of the Father's love, the Son's grace, and the Spirit's fellowship. In the participation of these, as the whole sum and substance in the covenant of grace, all the efficacy of salvation depends; and without these, the words of Christ, as delivered to Peter, hold with equal strength of application from age to age: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."

And lastly, to add no more: The highly favoured objects of this saving grace, need no more than the personal love of the Holy Three in One, to each individual member of Christ's mystical body, as they are in Christ, by this divine manifestation of the Lord to their hearts; for as the Lord said to Peter, by that

one act of each, "he that is washed, is clean, every whit." He needs no more; he can have no more. His whole spirit is regenerated, and made anew in Christ Jesus. All which plainly proves, that our most glorious Lord had an higher object in view, in this humiliating service of his, than the mere outward act of cleansing the feet. His gracious object was, to shadow forth the mighty effect, which he would accomplish for his people in their hearts, by his incommunicable work of salvation. And the Lord's choosing to set forth the shadow of it at the time he did, just before the passover; and also that the traitor Judas should be present, and outwardly partake of both, "who had no lot or part in the matter," in a way of saving grace to his soul; most decidedly demonstrated the mysterious nature of the service the Lord then performed; and which should have the same operation in the eyes of all his church that was then to come. Though the Lord Jesus himself washed the feet; though the Lord Jesus himself administered the ordinance of the supper; though the Lord Jesus himself, who "spake as never man spake," was the preacher; yet these things were purposely done, to set forth that outward ordinances may be, and shall be, from age to age, observed; yet, as the Lord declared by the prophet, "None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." (Dan. xii. 10.) The Lord who blessedly gave us this Scripture, give to all his people a right understanding of it; that each for himself may join in that song of salvation, and say with John; "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen."

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

"Ye call me Master, and Lord: and ye say well: for so I am.

"If I then your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you; The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent, greater than he that sent him.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." (John xiii. 12—17.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

The gracious condescending God and Saviour having finished this marvellous service, of washing the feet of the poor fishermen of Galilee; and having again put on his garments, and assumed his seat in the midst of them, began to call their attention to the pondering of the transaction. Let the reader figure to himself the Lord of life and glory, thus encircled by men of this description; and let him attend to the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. "Know ye," said Jesus, "what I have done to you?" Little did the best taught among them apprehend the great things veiled under this outward washing. And little, even to the present hour, do the Lord's people, who walk in the closest communion with the Lord, enter into the spiritual apprehension of the vast designs of Jehovah, in what should seem to us apparently the smallest acts of the Lord Jesus, when upon earth. If the

people of God were to accustom themselves never to contemplate our most glorious Christ, but as Christ; that is, I mean, under his two-fold character, as God and man combined; such a steady uniform and uninterrupted apprehension of his person, in this compound of two natures, would, under divine teaching, enable them to connect in their remembrance the GODHEAD of Christ, in all his words, actions, and ministry. Upon those occasions, where the GODHEAD bursted forth in a more visible and palpable display of his Almighty power; such as at the transfiguration, his cross, his resurrection, and the like; there our minds are more sensibly arrested with the conviction of his GODHEAD: but we are too apt to overlook his divine nature, in those daily transactions when upon earth Jesus went in and out among the people, dressed in the garb of a poor Jew; "the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." But, I would very affectionately recommend the reader, (if he be a Godly reader,) as I desire to feel the full impression of it on my own heart; never to forget that the very act of Christ, every word of Christ, every thought of Christ, was and is the act and word and thought of God; indwelling, (as the Holy Ghost by the apostle states it,) bodily or personally, in the human nature; in which the Word when made "flesh, dwelt among us." (Col. ii. 9. John. i. 14.) Such spiritual apprehensions of our most glorious Christ, and they can only be apprehended spiritually, will accustom our minds to ponder over all that we read in the holy Scriptures, in relation to the infinite dignity of his person, which gave infinite consequence to his manifestation; and of whom the Scripture declares; "his greatness is unsearchable." (Psalm cxlv. 3.)

Let this train of thought be brought into connection with the view we have taken of this marvellous

scene, of Jesus washing his disciples' feet; let the whole process be ascertained by this standard. Let the debased and sinful state of the whole party of the disciples considered as in themselves, be kept in view; let his glorious person be contemplated, as contrasted to their delinquency; and while with such impressions, we hear the Lord putting the question: "Know ye what I have done to you?" Let the reader ask himself; what answer, even in the present hour, can be given, that shall embrace all the interesting particulars which may be included in this wonderful administration? One instruction, and that of a most interesting nature, the Lord hath enabled al that are spiritually taught to gather from it; and which is as obvious as it is affectionate, and as powerfully in appeal to the spiritual senses of the Lord's people, as it is incumbent on them continually to have in remembrance; namely, that as the Lord Jesus did all this, and in a way so condescending and gracious in the days of his flesh; they may most safely conclude, and assure themselves, that he is not less attentive to them in the day of his power. It is very blessed to observe the different scenes by which the Lord manifested himself to his people. Here Jesus washed his deciples' feet, when supper was ended. Upon another occasion, Mary Magdalene washed Jesus's feet, and anointed them with sweet ointment; but in both instances, Christ's love was and is, the same. Indeed in all, Jesus can receive nothing from his creatures. His is to give, and not receive. His grace is glorified in giving out of his fulness; not that he may be made more blessed, for that is impossible: but that his people may be made happy. And what a full tide of blessedness, happiness, holiness, and unspeakable glory, will be in the spiritual enjoyment of the Lord's people in Christ; when having "washing them from all their sins in his

blood; he hath made them kings and priests unto God and the Father." (Rev. i. 5, 6.)

One very interesting part of our Lord's address to his disciples, after he had taken his garments, and was sat down with them, remains to be considered; "Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you." Here is somewhat very striking; and especially after what had taken place in the Lord's declaring himself both Lord and Master. For evidently they are somewhat more than one and the same. As disciples, the appellation Master, became applicable to Jesus; for all followers in all schools, are generally designated disciples. But the name of Lord is of peculiar beauty, and of the most endearing nature in reference to Christ. Hence through all the Scriptures of the New Testament, when the church at any time is speaking of God, as our Father; it is not unfrequently added, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the personal relation that every individual member of Christ's mystical body hath to Christ as our Lord, becomes the very foundation of our relationship in him, and by him to God as our Father. Beautiful and blessed are those Scriptures, in proof of our adoption character, when from receiving the Holy Ghost, we are enabled to say, Abba Father! "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." (Rom. viii. 15—17. Gal. iv. 6, 7.) I must not, for the limits will not allow me, enlarge. But otherwise, through the whole Bible, it would be easy to shew, how very highly the people of God prized this relationship with God in Christ. David sweetly sung his love-

song when he said, "The Lord said unto my Lord." (Psalm cx. 1.) Yea, the Father himself, speaking to the church, called her daughter, on the account of this relationship, and commanded her to know her Lord God, "He is thy Lord God, and worship thou him." (Psalm xlv. 10, 11.) And when the church, as in Hosea, united both Master and Lord, a double sweetness is found in it. (Hosea ii. 16, 17. See Mary's song, Luke i. 46. See Elizabeth's joy on the occasion, Luke i. 43. See Thomas's, John xx. 23.) And if the reader knows any thing of the Lord, he also will find peculiar sweetness in his own personal apprehension of the same. (1 Cor. i. 2. Philip. iii. 8.)

In relation to what our Lord said to his disciples, that as he had in such great condescension washed their feet; they also ought to wash one another's feet; this evidently extended not to the mere washing of feet, but to all the acts of love and kindness. For Jesus added; "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." And the Lord explained it still farther in shewing their perfect equality with each other; and that if they knew those things, it would be their pleasure to do them. In all these, the general acts of kindness to one another is meant. No part of Scripture states of any washing the disciples observed towards each other, in relation to their feet. And strange it is that ever the idea of holy water among men, should have taken rise from such an incident. And no less so, that holy Thursday, as it is unsuitably called, should have sprung from the same error. But what is there not that our poor fallen nature is liable to pervert, while in an unregenerated state, in substituting form and ceremony for vital goodness; and the doings of men, for the righteousness of Christ!

I cannot leave the subject, neither suffer my reader to close up the view which hath now been brought

before him, of our most glorious Lord; without once more, as he closeth the present perusal of the Scripture, calling upon him to behold the Lord of life and glory, as the evangelist here represented him. What a most lovely and endearing portrait is drawn of our Christ! Can the imagination conceive anything equally interesting, as that of the son of God, encircled by such an assemblage of the poor fishermen of Galilee, and in the act of stooping down to wash their feet! And what is yet more striking in the representation, and tends to give the highest finish to the whole picture; is the consideration that all this was done when the Lord Jesus, as Mediator, knew that "all things were given into his hands;" and he was not only the head of his body the church, but the Eternal and Universal Lord of the whole creation of God; "the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Methinks, I would have every redeemed and regenerated child of God everlastingly have in remembrance such views of the infinite greatness, and infinite humbleness, blended in one, of our most glorious Christ. Oh, how divinely suited is he for every case, and every circumstance of his people! What can he not *do;* what will he not *do;* for his "own, which are in the world," and of whom it is said; "having always loved them he loveth them unto the end?" Methinks I would have the proud ones of the earth, come and learn a lesson from this view of our Christ. Oh, ye great little men; here stand and contemplate the Son of God! Could it be possible while beholding such a scene, that any one could ever more carry himself proudly to a fellow creature? Could he tower it with a lordly brow over a nature in every sense like his own; and then behold the King of heaven, washing poor men's feet? Could any, who know themselves to be but dust and ashes; and if the next moment the puff of

breath was stopped, would instantly become so, assume a pride unsuited to the mud-walls of dying creatures; and fancy themselves to be something when they are nothing? But I turn from the unavailing expostulation. Let the redeemed and regenerated child of God, however, not fail to gather in this contemplation of the Lord Jesus, the numberless rich consolations the interesting history affords. Never shall my soul doubt the grace, the love, the condescending favour of our most glorious Lord; while I here behold, and under the Spirit's teaching learn to know the full display of such divine acts of clemency the Lord sheweth his people. True, Lord! "I am poor and needy, but the Lord thinketh upon me." Yes; I do know somewhat of the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." This therefore shall encourage me under all my circumstances of poverty; for if Jesus, when rich, became poor for my sake; when I am poor, the Lord will be my portion in his riches; and as he saith himself, "riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness." (Prov. viii. 18.) Enable me to have this always in view: and while I behold such grace of my Lord to his disciples, let me carry about with me this precious Scripture, and wear it with more delight than the golden chain of the neck, or the frontlet between the eyes: "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me." (Psalm x.l 17.)

One word more, before we close our present view of the whole. Let no redeemed and regenerated child of God take concern that the traitor Judas was of the party, when the Son of God condescended to this great humiliation. Methinks, the consideration is so far from giving cause of distress, that it ministers to holy joy. Grace is never beheld with equal

delight, never so much enjoyed, as when it is *distinguishing* grace. That the ungodly mingle in the congregation of the righteous, is as old as the world. Abel's offering and Cain's were at the same time. And we are told that in the days of Job, "when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them. Be it so. It shall serve under the divine unction, to make my soul more alive, to be on the look-out at all ordinances, for the Lord of the ordinances; and that nothing may satisfy my soul, until I find the savour of Christ's name in the service, be it what it may, "as ointment poured forth." (Song. i. 3.)

It will not be long before that this mingled state of things shall for ever cease; when there shall be no more "the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." (Zech. xiv. 21.) "Violence shall be no more heard in the land; wasting nor destruction within thy borders; thy walls shall be called salvation, and thy gates praise. But the Lord shall be unto his church an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." (Isa. lx. 18, 19.)

# THE SHIPWRECK

OF

# THE APOSTLE PAUL.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

"And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

"And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

"And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

"And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.

"And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

"And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone;

"And hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea." (Acts xxvii. 1—8.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I DETAIN the reader, at the very entrance on this history of the apostle Paul's voyage, to observe to him how it is worded. "And when it was determined

that we should sail into Italy" Who determined this? Festus had the vanity to think that he had determined it. (See Acts xxv. 12.) Poor deluded man! A much higher authority than an earthly governor, had arranged this long before Festus was born, in that "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." (2 Sam. xxiii. 5.) And Paul himself had been favoured with a vision immediately from the Lord, to tell him that he should bear witness for the Lord at Rome. (Acts xxiii. 11.) Could the world be made sensible of this divine ordination, when at any time the great ones of the earth are carrying themselves proudly, how would it tend to lessen their high-blown loftiness in the consciousness that they are but mere instruments for accomplishing the purposes of the divine will! The Lord's people, however, though unrenewed men know it not, should have it always in remembrance. It would save them many an heart-ach, when at any time matters are dark and unpromising. In every event of life, the Lord is carrying on his own wise and unerring counsel concerning them. And his language, did they listen to it, and mark the tendencies of his grace in all that concerns their present and everlasting welfare, speaks in the same tender and affectionate manner as Jesus did to his disciples, when on earth: "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." (John xiii. 7.)

Let the reader observe, what is said of "Paul and certain other prisoners," being delivered into the charge of a centurion named Julius. Who, and what, those other prisoners were, is not said; but it should seem to have been, if not a goodly company, yet a numerous one, for the whole number of the crew on board, as we read in another verse (37), was no less than "two hundred, and threescore, and sixteen souls!" And here again ariseth no small subject for instruction to the Lord's people, whose lot, for the

most part, is not unfrequently cast among the carnal and profane. Painful as it is, and sometimes productive of sharp and trying exercises; yet there is much wisdom in the Lord's ordination, who "fixeth the bounds of his people's habitation." When we call to mind the one common fallen nature of all; and if now recovered by grace, to be able to mark the difference between ourselves and such as are still "in darkness, and the shadow of death;" yea, between what we once were, when like them, and what we now are, when "followers of God as dear children;" how will the sweet and affectionate words of the Holy Ghost by the apostle, often come home endeared to the heart: "For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou, that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) Nay, to go one step farther in the spiritual improvement to be made of living in a carnal family, or among graceless relations; and when, like one of old, the heart is constrained to say: "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar!" (Psalm cxx. 5.) Yet, even here, the Lord sometimes over-rules the very evils of their lives, to our greater good. For when from "day to day," like Lot, "our souls are vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, and in seeing and hearing their unlawful deeds;" often amidst such scenes, to the redeemed and regenerated child of God, will these endearing expressions of the Lord the Holy Ghost come afresh, to the recollection and comfort of the soul: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. vi. 11, 9.)

I pause in this place, to bless the Lord for his mercies to Paul, in his over-ruling the mind of Julius to this courtesy, in allowing him to go on shore, to see his friends at Sidon, and refresh himself. Tyre

and Sidon had been favoured with the Lord's presence during his ministry on earth. (Matt. xv. 21.) And the disciples, which were scattered on account of the persecutions after the death of Stephen, had preached in the same neighbourhood. And Paul himself had been here before. (Acts xxi. 3—6.) It is highly probable that there was now a church formed among them. It must have been a high gratification to the apostle, that the centurion indulged him with this liberty. And is it not reasonable to conclude, that the Lord, of whom it is sublimely said, "He gathereth the wind in his fists, and hath bound the waters in a garment;" directed the ship to this very port, purposely, for this interview of Paul with the Lord's people which were there? And hence, as the Lord guided the winds and the sails; so the Lord influenced the centurion's heart: for there was a needsbe that both Paul and the people at Sidon should have a meeting, and spiritual refreshment together, in that meeting, from the Lord.

But while I bless the Lord for his mercies to Paul, on that occasion; I beseech the reader not to pass away from the review of this part of the apostle's history; until that he hath first looked up for grace, and examined whether he cannot find somewhat to call forth his praises to the Lord, for many such an interposition from the Lord, in his own. It is of all others the most necessary truth to be impressed on the mind, that the Lord "waters his church every moment, and keeps her night and day, lest any hurt her." (Isa. xxvii. 3.) In a world like the present, where, from the very nature of things, the hatred manifested to our glorious Head must be alike rankling in the heart, if not continually breaking out against all his members; nothing can so effectually tend to bear the child of God up against all opposition from that quarter, as the constant remembrance that the

Lord reigneth! The reins of government of men's hearts, are in his Almighty hands; and their arms he restrains: yea, and as he said himself to a furious oppressor of old, who vaunted what he would do to the people of God: "I will put my hook," said the Lord, "in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips." (2 Kings xix. 28.) And what can any man do against the Lord's people, as long as the Lord's hook is fixed in their enemy's nostrils; and their lips made ever lastingly sore by the curb of the Lord's bridle? Oh! what a fool have I been upon numberless occasions in life, in dreading this man's displeasure, and that man's frown! when, had I done as the prophet did by his servant, (2 Kings vi. 17.) prayed the Lord to open mine eyes; I should have seen the Lord's *hook* and the Lord's *bridle* preventing all their prancings. Sweetly that Scripture, if felt and acted upon by faith, husheth all into a calm of constant peace: "Fear ye not their fear, nor be afraid; sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be for a sanctuary." (Isa. viii. 12—14.)

I detain the reader with no farther observation on what is said in those verses, than just to observe the graciousness of the Lord towards his servant, in that of appointing several of Paul's "companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," to be with him in this voyage. That Luke was with him is more than probable, from what we read, 2 Tim. iv. 11. Phil. 24. And Trophimus (Paul told Timothy, in his second Epistle) he left at Miletum sick; which could not have been, had he not been with him when, after the shipwreck, they all landed there. (2 Tim. iv. 20.) Aristarchus is mentioned by some, as being of the company. And this man was much beloved by the apostle, and was his frequent companion. (See Acts xix. 29. and xx. 4.)

And we read of him as Paul's fellow-prisoner. (2 Col. iv. 10.) We know but little of his history; neither of the history of thousands, whose names are in the book of life. But what a gathering will that be, when the whole, as satellites round the sun, shall be formed in one vast assembly, encircling the person of our most glorious Christ; "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe!" (2 Thess. i. 10.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them,

"And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

"Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

"And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth towards the south-west and north-west.

"And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.

"But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.

"And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive,

"And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat:

"Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven." (Acts xxvii. 9—17.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

I THINK it more than probable, that the fast here alluded to, was the great day of atonement, observed most strictly by the Jews, wherever they were. But this had no reference to the Roman centurion Julius, and the soldiers on board. But though Paul and his companions, no doubt, scrupulously regarded that solemn season; yet it being now passed, he might, as he did, admonish the ship's company to take food. And his presuming to foreknowledge of what the event of this voyage would be, in shipwreck; though for the time it had no weight with either the centurion, or the master of the vessel; yet, in the after circumstances which occurred, no doubt it operated to give the greater consequence to the apostle's subsequent discourse. Thus the Lord, sometimes, and not unfrequently, prepares his people for what the Lord is preparing for them; and, by a process of grace, predisposeth his people's minds to be in expectation of his holy will. It is very blessed in even the common circumstances of life, to be watching the leadings of the Lord, who, whether we regard it or not, is always watching us. Very sweet to this point is that Scripture: "Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy one of Israel. I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit; which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." (Isa. xlviii. 17.)

I pray the reader to observe with me, how the subject proceeds, and how the relation is worded: "And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete." The apostle had pre-admonished them, that the voyage would be with hurt, and much damage; not only of the ship, and cargo, but also of their lives. But these things, coming from

a poor prisoner, were considered as idle tales, "for they believed them not." And a soft south wind, coming, as they thought, very opportunely, not foreseeing the tempest in the womb of it, they caught at the opening prospect, and launched forth.

Let the reader pause to remark, how very frequent such events are in life. Who shall calculate the number of those apparently auspicious mornings, which have been followed by destructive nights! How many a voyage in life, hath opened with the gentle gale, like the south-wind of these mariners, blowing softly; which hath been succeeded with tremendous storms, and made a watery grave soon after. What histories, in the Lord's people, furnish out proofs of similar thwarting providences! The patriarch Job began the day of life in a full sun-shine of prosperity, for he was "the greatest of all the men of the east." Look at him a little after, and behold him "scraping himself with a potsherd, as he sat down among the ashes on a dung-hill." (Job i. 3. with ii. 7, 8.)

Look at the prophet David, when quite a youth, singled out from among his brethren to be king over Israel! (1 Sam. xvi. 1, 12, 13.) Hear the man's own confession of the events which followed in his life, when he came to sum them up all together, and present them before the Lord: "Lord," said he, "remember David, and all his afflictions!" (Psalm cxxxii. 1.)

But what are the improvements from such views! They are most sweet and precious. They all speak, yea, and with a loud voice too, that however outward providences may vary, there is no change in the love of God. Every minute circumstance, in relation to the government of the Lord's people, is arranged with an infinite wisdom, that cannot err; and with an eye to their eternal good, that cannot possibly fail. The construction of their lives, like the construction of their bodies, is so beautiful framed, that a synod

of angels, if convened day by day, could not improve; and not a single iota appointed for them can be left out, no more than one of the organs of their system in nature could be omitted without deranging the whole. Paul must give witness for the Lord at Rome. Paul must go thither by water. Paul must suffer shipwreck, and must "be cast upon a certain island." The Lord of heaven and earth had many and weighty concerns for his servant to perform by this voyage. Yea, the very lives of the people that were with him were given to him for their preservation. What a world of mysteries are we in! What a world is every child of God in mystery to himself!

The reader must not overlook the simple but beautiful manner of the relation in which this history of Paul's voyage was carried on. Not long after, this south wind blowing softly, there arose a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon; modern navigators called it a Levanter, because it is unusual in the Mediterranean. It is described as different from any other wind, however violent, which blows in one direction, for this acts in a circular manner like a whirlwind. And hence it is said, that the ship was caught by it, as if taken up in the hand: so that in this case, neither sails nor rudder were any longer useful; all was at the mercy of the waves, and the ship was let to drive.

Let us pause over the account, for it is profitable. What a transition was at once made; from the soft easy breeze of the helpful wind, to the dreadful state of a storm, which carried the very tempest in its womb! And such, not unfrequently, are the changes in life. How often are men called from the house of feasting to the house of mourning! Nay, not merely from house to house, but from one chamber to another, under the same roof! Who among the sons of men is the sure proprietor of to-morrow? Who that in the morning ariseth through mercy in health and safety,

but may be a corpse before night! What a very gracious and affectionate advice is that which the apostle gives in the contemplation of such vicissitudes to which the human life is exposed! "This I say, brethren," said he, "the time is short; it remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away. But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord." (1 Cor. vii. 28—32.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship;

"And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

"And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

"But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

"And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

"For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

"Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

"Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

"Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island." (Acts xxvii. 18—26.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

We have here presented to us, some few of the outlines of the storm, into which Paul and the ship's company were brought, and which at length terminated in shipwreck. To follow the sacred history, through all the particulars, and to give an adequate representation is impossible. All language fails. To stand on the shore of a neck of land, in full view of the sea, and behold the most tremendous storm a landsman ever saw, or his imagination could conceive, would still fall so far short of the reality, and of what they feel that are in it, as the painting of a lion on canvas is, to that of meeting a real lion in the highway. None but they can tell who have been in a storm, and beheld the sea in every direction around them, rising mountains high, and again sinking into the gulph below; driven, as here stated, at the mercy of winds and waves, and "neither sun nor stars appearing for many days together;" the tempest raging all the while with unabating fury, until all hopes of being saved by human means is taken away. The Holy Ghost, in one of the Psalms, hath drawn this subject in so sublime a manner, and connected with it such views of the infinite grace and goodness of the Lord, in watching over those whose occupation is among sea-faring men, as is most interesting. In the service appointed for the daily use of the Navy, this Scripture, which is the cviith Psalm, forms a part: and indeed is such as no man engaged in a maritime life should ever neglect. I persuade myself, my reader on the present occasion of meditating on Paul's voyage, whether land's-man or sailor, will not be displeased in my adverting to it. If connected with the history before us, and the several parts brought forth, and compared with the log-book (if it

may be so termed) here presented, of the apostle, and his ship's company; that both will beautifully illustrate and explain each other; and furnish from the whole, such scriptural and spiritual improvements, as, under divine teaching, cannot fail of being abundantly useful to every redeemed and regenerated child of God, whether of the land or sea.

That part of this divine Psalm to which I refer, and which is connected with the similar relation here given of the storm Paul met with in his voyage, opens in this manner: "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then they are glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh! that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men." (Psalm cvii. 23—31.)

What a grandeur of expression is here given in a few words, of that vast expanse of ocean, and of the divine operations in the government of it, and yet what a beautiful simplicity runs through the whole. Had the most learned of men been convened, to have formed the description, and even spent a volume in their labour; all must have been flat and insipid, compared to what the Holy Ghost, by the inspired pen of his servant, hath here given in the compass of a few verses. Surely it carries with it a decided testimony of its divine authority! But let the reader go over

the several parts of it again, and observe what a vast mass of instruction, as well as beauty, is contained in it, in relation to the several leading doctrines which are traceable in it, in the various departments of nature, providence, and grace.

In all the works of nature, none arrest the mind more strongly in proof of divine power and divine sovereignty, than the contemplation of the congregated waters, which form so large a portion of the universe of this world. "All the waters," said the wise man, "run into the sea; yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again." (Eccles. i. 7.) Who shall calculate the extent of it? who explain its briny nature; its unceasing motion, and its tides? Who shall number either the variety, or the multitudes, of the living creatures which dwell therein? "Such is the great and wide sea," saith the Psalmist, "wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein." (Psa. civ. 25, 26.) The huge bulk of this animal, and the vast room required for his movements, are strikingly expressed under the image of play. He is the only creature of God made without fear. "He laugheth at the shaking of a spear." (Job xli. throughout.)

But what I would yet more immediately desire to impress on the reader's mind, in reference to this subject, is, not only the almighty sovereignty of God in such works over this element in nature; but in his providence also. He is said "to have laid the beams of his chambers in the waters, to make the clouds his chariots, and to walk upon the wings of the wind." The same Almighty God that hath created in nature the watery inhabitants of this part of his universe, is said no less in providence to be their caterer. And while "the young lions of the earth, roaring after

their prey, do seek their meat from God; both the small and great beasts of the sea wait all upon him, who giveth them their meat in due season." (Psa. civ. 3.) I would have all the Lord's people methinks, both by sea and by land, keep these views of the Lord's Providence always in remembrance. He that providently takes care of the beasts and birds of the earth, and of the fishes in the sea, will not be inattentive to the wants of his children. Numberless are the instances where, when a whole ship's company have been at short allowance, yea, and even worse than this, have had neither bread nor water remaining; suddenly and unexpectedly the Lord hath appeared for them, and, by meeting some ship better provided, hath sent them supplies. That sweet Scripture should be in the heart of every one who knows the Lord, and especially sea-faring men: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." (Isa. xli. 17.)

In attending to the more immediate subject of this Scripture, with an eye also to the voyage of the apostle Paul, it will lead to a matter of great improvement, to observe the divine order, which is here stated, of the Lord in his operations on the watery element. "Those who go down to the sea in ships, and do business in great waters," may well be said, "to see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep, when at his command the stormy wind ariseth, which lifteth up the waves thereof!" Hence herefrom we learn, that it is not from any self-acting principle in the wind, as if from certain casualties, this agent of the air operates. Not so. For though the Lord of hosts works by instruments, according as he hath constituted such and such means, to produce such and such ends; yet, "He it is," (as it is elegantly expres-

sed in Holy Scripture,) "who hath gathered the wind in his fists, and hath bound the waters in a garment." (Prov. xxx. 4.) We have a decisive testimony of this, in the instance of our Lord himself; who when a great storm beat upon the ship in which Christ and his disciples were embarked, insomuch that the ship was filled with the waves; the Lord arose, "and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace! be still! And instantly the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." (Mark iv. 37—41.) And cannot the same Almighty power produce the same effects now? Are there no sailors living who can attest to this divine truth; whose prayers in hour of need, when awakened by grace, have been answered in mercy? No doubt, instances are not a few, where seafaring men, who have known the Lord, have found our most glorious Christ a prayer-awakening, and a prayer-hearing Lord midst storms and tempests. For he is, "Jesus Christ: the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." (Heb. xiii. 8.)

But we must not stop here. It will be proper to follow the subject, not only through the departments of nature, and of providence, but of grace. The Psalm hath a spiritual eye to the people of God: for while the statement is made, that there is cause for general, yea, for universal thanksgiving to the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever; the Holy Scripture adds: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." (Psalm cvii. 2.) Vast and extensive are the reasons, in the life of every man, to give thanks to the Lord, for the common blessings of the Lord's goodness in nature and in providence; but when from these outer courts of the Lord's world, the redeemed and regenerated child of God is brought into the courts of his grace, what an overflowing tide pours in upon the soul "to praise the Lord for his goodness, and for

his wonderful works to the children of men." (Psalm cvii. 8.) Every child of God may be truly said to go down to the sea in ships, and see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep; when at the command of the Lord, the winds and tempests arise, in opening to their view the mystery of iniquity working within them, in order to bring them into a soul-felt acquaintance with the mystery of godliness in Christ Jesus, which hath been wrought out for them. Oh, who shall describe the dreadful tossings, the fears, and alarms, of the guilty conscience, when first the sinner is arrested at the tribunal and bar of God's justice; and his sins rising on every side, like mountains of waves to his view, and threatening to swallow him up every moment! Here the imagery of Holy Scripture is fully realized, which saith: "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest; whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." (Isa. lvii. 20, 21.)

When circumstances are thus surrounding them, fears within, and storms without: if any thing for the moment gives the smallest gleam of hope, they attempt somewhat to allay the billows in exerting themselves for their deliverance; and like the sailors in Paul's voyage, "cast over-board, with their own hands, the tackling of the ship." But all natural efforts, in spiritual concerns, fail of giving relief. Wave follows wave in the mind of the troubled conscience, as do the watery elements in the shipwreck of the sea. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appear, all hope of salvation by an arm of flesh is then taken away. And then the Lord, who raised the storm in the conscience, pours in by the sweet influence of his Holy Spirit, some cheering consolations of hope in Christ; the spiritual mariner finds a stay to the mind,

to take some confidence in, until a more open deliverance is given by the Lord.

This is very blessedly set forth in the apostle's voyage, when, in a vision of the night, the Lord made a revelation of himself to Paul. "There stood by me," said Paul, "this night the angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee!" I pray the reader not to pass hastily away from what is here said. First, the apostle sets forth the Lord's claim and special right, which in covenant connections, God had of him in Christ; "whose I am." Secondly, the special right Paul had in God, by the same inalienable charter of grace; "whom I serve." Thirdly, this the apostle not only made special but *personal,* "whose *I* am:" not of the others which were with him. Whose *they* were, he ventured not to determine; but for *himself,* he could and did say, "whose I am." Fourthly, the wonderful events folded up in this special providence of the Lord: namely, "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Can any thing be more blessed and gracious than such an act of the Divine procedure? Not only Paul shall be saved, but all that are with him. And who shall say how often the same grace is now manifested in ordinary life; where the ungracious are saved, in dwelling with the gracious; and where ungodly parents, masters, and children, are delivered from temporary calamities, from their living with, or being connected with, their godly relations. And lastly: it is no small part of the blessed communications in this vision, that Paul was taught, and therefore under the spirit of prophecy was enabled to declare, the method how the Lord would preserve the whole ship's company, and thus confirm what the apostle had asserted, when he said "whose I am, and whom I

serve:" "We must be cast upon a certain island." So that when the event took place, the whole ship's company might recollect that what Paul had promised, was then literally fulfilled.

I cannot pass away from the view of these circumstances, without first having noticed the very beautiful and interesting doctrine they contain; not only to Paul, but to the whole church of God. The covenant of grace brings the Lord's people into the same privileges in all ages of the church. "If ye be Christ's," saith the same apostle, "then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. iii. 29.) And when from divine teaching, a child of God can say, "whose I am, and whom I serve;" being given by the Father, married and redeemed by the Son, and regenerated by the Holy Ghost; then, all and every divine perfection is made over, in covenant engagements, to be called forth, as circumstances shall require, for the temporal, spiritual, and eternal welfare, of the whole members of Christ's mystical body; married to Christ; redeemed by Christ, made one with Christ, all that He is as Christ, the head of his body the church, is ours. His person, his righteousness, his sacrifice, his obedience, his blood-shedding, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, and entrance into glory; yea, his whole body the church, to all intents and purposes, are risen with him, ascended with him, and sitting with him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Eph. ii. 5, 6.) And very blessedly it is said, and confirmed also by the Holy Ghost, that "He is made of God to us, wisdom and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord!" (1 Cor. i. 30, 31.)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed, that they drew near to some country:

"And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little farther, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.

"Then fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

"And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,

"Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

"Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off." (Acts xxvii. 27—32.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

The Holy Ghost, in these verses, is prosecuting the same history. The storm hath not in the least subsided. All looks black and lowering. Every circumstance tends to indicate that the prophecy of Paul would be realized, and shipwreck close the scene. But it was a cheering hope in the midst of the storm, had the shipmen properly regarded it, that the apostle assured them, not a single life would be lost; the ship only destroyed. I detain the reader a moment, to observe the very great regard which the Lord here shewed to his servant, amidst the heathenish crew. Their salvation from a watery grave, was on Paul's account. The Lord not only saved Paul, but the whole of the ship's company which were with Paul. And thus not unfrequently, in common life, the Lord honours his servants who honour him:

their faith gives credit to God, and God will recompense their faith. And if my reader be a gracious reader, I venture to persuade myself, that he can be no stranger, in his own history, to events of a similar nature. Godly men on shore, as well as men of the same complexion on ship-board, find many occasions to discover how the Lord hath been watching over them for good, while they have been waiting on the Lord. That very precious assurance of the Lord is often realized, in which the Lord saith, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer: and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Isa. lxv. 24.)

I detain the reader to make a short observation over what is said of the whole ship's company being driven up and down in Adria. The scene is that which lieth between the Ionian Islands and the coast of Africa; no small compass of sea-room for a vessel like that in which Paul and the crew were embarked to be driven upon. And such, if we consider the subject spiritually, is the extent of those tribulated waters, through which the people of God are brought, midst storms and tempests, when in the voyage of life they are launched from nature's darkness, and brought into soul distress for sin. Every redeemed and regenerated child of God, when as yet not landed on Christ the Rock of ages, finds more or less an Adria, or troubled sea, to be driven up and down in. And whether on ship-board or on shore, all is tempest. The man of Uz described this perturbed state of mind in strong colours: "When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day," (Job vii. 4. 5.) And although, while under such apprehensions, like the navigators in this vessel, they sound and sound again, and cast out anchor after anchor, making every exertion of human art to find

relief; yet never, till the Lord gives the anchor of hope which is both sure and steadfast, can any deliverance be obtained to ride out the storm. When Jesus saith "Peace, be still!" then, and not till then, there comes a calm: and "Christ is formed in the heart the hope of glory." (Heb. vi. 19. Mark iv. 39. Colos. i. 27.)

The perfidy of those who, under pretence of letting down the boat into the sea to promote the general safety of all, meant to have saved themselves, and left the rest to perish; affords a very interesting instruction of a spiritual nature; and which ought not, in a work of this kind, to be passed from hastily. In the first view of things, it might be supposed that the common danger to which the whole ship's company were alike exposed, would have kindled one common affection; but in this we calculate wrongly. Among other awful features of delinquency, induced by the fall of Adam, the whole race imbibed a selfishness, which, even those recovered by grace in spirit do not get deliverance from in body. And all the refinements of education, however the mind may be varnished over with a speciousness of appearance, still leave this root of selfishness within. It is a blessed thought, however, that at death, when the body, which is the seat of selfishness, drops into the grave, this bitter root drops and moulders with it. And when Jesus, in the resurrection-morn, shall come to raise up his members a glorified body, all selfish considerations will be done away for ever. And this perfection of our nature in body, soul, and spirit, wholly communicated from him, who is the source and fountain of all holiness, happiness, and glory; will make the whole glorified church in heaven, as the spiritual church is said to have been in spirit, after the descent of the Holy Ghost on earth, "of one heart and of one soul." (Acts iv. 32.) It is not possible even to contemplate to the full the blessedness of this state! But the bare

apprehension of it, according to the statement of Scripture, serves to open to the mind of the redeemed and regenerated child of God, a prospect of the highest felicity. No doubt a great mass of our present evils are increased in bulk, from the inordinate affection we have to ourselves, and those vile bodies we so much pamper; but in the upper and brighter world, all will be done away—swallowed up in the contemplation and love of God in his Trinity of persons, as manifested in the person of our most glorious Christ: all the ransomed of the Lord, returned to Zion, will habitually glorify God for his own glory; and will love every member of Christ's mystical body, with the same love as themselves; as members of the glorious Head, and members with each other, in full participation of blessedness, and holiness and happiness in him.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.

"Wherefore I pray you to take some meat, for this is for your health; for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.

"And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.

"Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.

"And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls." (Acts xxvii. 33—37.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

If I have not again and again called upon the reader, to observe the beautiful vein of unstudied elegance, blended with simplicity, which runs through

this whole narrative, I hope nevertheless, that he hath been led to notice it, from an higher teaching. Surely, if on this account only, it were brought forth to the view of men, it would demand universal regard. And I shall not be thought invidious if I say, it would have universal regard from all that profess to be admirers of beauty and elgance in writing, if it were found any where but in the sacred volume. The Bible, on this account, independent of infinitely higher causes, demands unrivalled superiority in the library of the professed lovers of wisdom; and how much more among those who are "made wise unto salvation, through the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The imagination cannot fully form to itself what must have been the feelings of the whole ship's company, as they all waited the coming on of the day. With many no doubt there were fearful apprehensions they should never see the day; but be swallowed up by the sea, or stranded by shipwreck, before the morning. Landsmen, when travelling in the dark of the night, and have lost their way, may have some faint conception of what the wishing for the return of day is. And sick rooms, and chambers of death, where the groans of the dying are in the hearing only of the solitary friend or relation, may serve to show how desirable the daylight is, under such circumstances. But it is the sailor alone, who hath himself braved the horrors of impending shipwreck, or passed through a dark tempestuous night, where every moment the countenances of the watchful crew have indicated the expectation of foundering, that can fully enter into what is here said; "while the day was coming on." Yes! there is a case spiritually considered, where those on shore, as well as those at sea, may, and will feel the most ardent desire for the morning: I mean, such as, under deep distress of soul, pass through a long and dark night of sore temptation. If my reader be himself

spiritually taught, he will not need my description of it. In one of the Psalms it is more strikingly represented, when the sufferer is said to cry out, from the depths of sin, to the depths of divine mercy; and when with an earnestness which can take no denial, he exclaims: "My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning: yea, I say, more than they that watch for the morning." (Psalm cxxx. throughout.)

I admire the firmness of Paul. I admire and adore yet more the Lord, who gave him that firmness. His confidence in the Lord, evidently for the time acting like electricity, communicated to the whole a cheerfulness and hope. In exhorting them to take meat, and urging it on the consideration that they had continued fasting for fourteen days, must not be strained as though no food whatsoever had been received by them; but that such had been the necessity of watching the ship's motion, and the greatness of the storm, that they had no regular meals. And I pray the reader not to overlook the grace of Paul, in blessing God, in the presence of them all, before he himself ate, or gave bread to them. How much cause have those to blush, who, from mingling in societies where the name of God is not reverenced, scarce ask a blessing on themselves, or their food: or if there be a form of words used, it is for the most part done irreverently, and without godly fear.

I only detain the reader to observe the record that is made of the number of the ship's company. And I beg him not to over look the particularity of the expression: for when stating the amount of two hundred, threescore, and sixteen; the sacred historian doth not say persons, but souls! Yes, every one of them had an immortal soul. So that it was not the preservation of their bodies from shipwreck, that we are to consider, as we attend to this history;

but we are reminded by the manner of expression, that they were immortal souls; all of which have long since entered the eternal world, and are now in endless happiness, or endless misery. The Holy Ghost is silent respecting them, on this infinite and important point. And it cannot be our province to form any judgment, whether the salvation from shipwreck, and the ministry of the apostle, under the Lord's blessing, wrought a change of heart, and became instrumental to their salvation from eternal death, among many of them is not said. And there it rests.

## HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

"And when it was day, they knew not the land; but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.

"And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.

"And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

"And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.

"But the centurion willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land.

"And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land." (Acts xxvii. 38—44.)

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

We may, and indeed we ought, to glean a very blessed spiritual instruction from the conduct of these mariners, in the prudence they manifested for self-preservation. When they had taken as much sustenance as nature then required, "they cast the remainder of the wheat and cargo into the sea, and lightened the ship." They knew, that before another meal would be required, the event of the voyage in life or death, must take place: and therefore, if by lightening the ship of her burden, their prospect of salvation would be the more; all became of no value now, compared to the preservation of their lives. And such, but in an eminently higher degree, should be the conduct of the child of God, in his voyage through this world. So infinitely momentous is "the one thing needful," even the salvation of the soul; that every one impressed with a suitable apprehension of it, will gladly throw overboard all and every thing that might act as unnecessary ballast, and tend to impede the spiritual navigation. For as it is by the sailor, on the ocean of this world, who values not, in times of storms and tempests, the gilding of the ship, or the beauty of her construction; compared to the soundness of her bottom, and that she is water-tight and wind-tight to bear the sea; so by the spiritual sailor: his great concern is, "What must I do to be saved?" He is sailing for that city, "which hath foundations; whose Builder and Maker is God." All his lading is therefore, such as is suited for that better country. The goods he wishes to have shipped are simply no more than may be necessary for the wants of the voyage: and all superfluities, like the crew with Paul, are thrown overboard, and disregarded. Hence, not only upon this occasion, but

upon every other, after the Lord had brought him acquainted with himself, we hear the heavenly apostle saying: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless; and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in him." (Philip. iii. 7, 8.)

What sayeth my reader to this statement? It will be from the special grace of the Lord if both writer and reader be found so prosecuting their voyage to the other world, through all the tides of this. If He "who hath placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves and roar, yet cannot prevail;" if He, "whose name is the Lord of hosts," is at the helm, becomes himself the compass, and guides the rudder: very sure I am, bottomed in this spiritual navigation like Paul, with equal confidence may we say, "There shall not an hair of the head fall!" No loss of any man's life, spiritually and eternally, can take place, who is thus in Christ: but of the ship, of this world only. As the apostle observed upon another occasion, so may all like him, the objects and subjects of grace, say now; "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing: as poor yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2 Cor. vi. 10.)

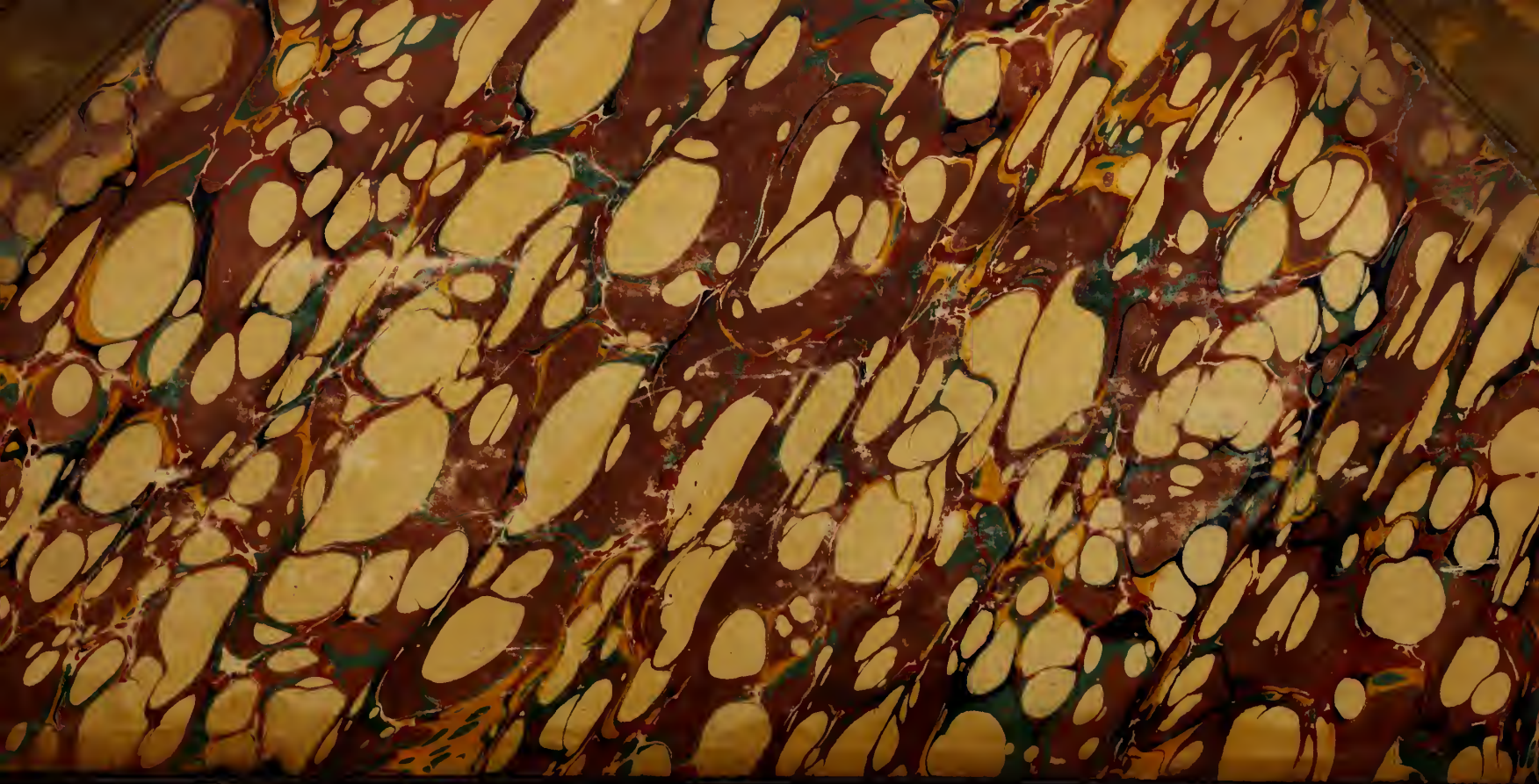
I do not think it necessary to swell these pages with observations upon what is said of the shipwreck itself. The sacred historian hath related it in terms of so much beautiful simplicty, as would rather be injured than improved, by any attempt of illustration. Let me only, therefore call the reader's attention to the last verse of the chapter, which contains the concluding relation of the voyage, and confirms the apostle's

prophecy, in recording the goodness of the Lord. The whole ship's company, of "two hundred, threescore and sixteen souls," without the loss of a single person, were all saved: "some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, they escaped all safe to land."

And what a beautiful view doth the whole afford, of the Lord's government and watchfulness over his people; both in providence and grace! And who that beholds the marvellous history with an eye of faith, but must be constrained to cry out, in the words of one of old: "Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." (Rom. xi. 33.)

One more special and particular observation, I would desire to call the reader's attention to; which if he be a gracious reader cannot fail to arrest his attention, and under divine teaching, will be found useful to him among a thousand occurrences in life. The observation I refer to is this; that the embarkation of Paul and his company, with all the events that followed, were not only ordered and arranged in the unerring counsel of infinite wisdom: but by a special mark of grace to the apostle, were opened to his mind from the beginning. And the promise which the Lord gave to Paul in a vision of the night, became as sure in the apostle's mind, as when fulfilled. And such are all the promises of God to his people: though not all revealed as was his, for this special purpose. "All the promises of God in Christ Jesus, are yea and Amen." This is one absolute, fixed, and certain thing. Let what will intervene between the promise and the accomplishment; with these the Lord's people have nothing to do. His is, to bring all to pass; ours is to believe. And however dark and unpromising soever, at times, things may appear

wait but the upshot; and all will manifest the divine faithfulness. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Num. xxiii. 20.) The Lord accompany this, and all other Scriptures, to the spiritual apprehension of his people; and "to him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

END OF THE FIFTH VOLUME.

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